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HONOR O'HARA.

VOL. II.

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HONOR O'HARA.

A Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS A. M. PORTER,

AUTHOR OF "THE HUNGARIAN BROTHERS,"

"THE RECLUSE OF NORWAY,"

&c. &c. &c.

"O when shall I regain my orbit of peace and glory!"

ERSKINE'S *Internal Evidence*, &c.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

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ERRATA IN VOL. II.

Page 19. line 12. *for are read and.*

31. line 4. from bottom, *for rarely read surely.*

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HONOR O'HARA.

CHAPTER I.

HONORIA first heard of Fitz Arthur's journey, at her second home, at Hazeldean, where she went to spend a long day with Mrs. Preston, whilst the Miss Prestons went somewhere else. She was busily making up one of her plain-dressing friend's lawn caps, when the latter took occasion to revert to the good-natured jests which had followed Captain Fitz Arthur's departure from her house a few days before. She did not herself spare Honoria upon the subject of her affected indifference to her favourite.

Our naughty heroine defended herself as well as she was able; yet maintaining her actual indifference to Fitz Arthur's pre-

ference, in spite of a certain exuberant pleasure, of which she really felt ashamed, and which might have told her she did not in truth set so lightly by his affection as she idly fancied. Mrs. Preston pressed the subject more seriously; vouching for the depth and sincerity of her favourite's sentiments.

Honoria did not choose to let the seriousness continue: — “ Well, well !” she cried, laughing, though she blushed, “ he won't die of it, you see, since he can go hither and thither, at will, without coming to say good bye, or with your leave; he's a mighty cavalier, careless sort of a lover, — if he be one, which I doubt. I tell you, Captain Fitz Arthur is not the sort of man to feel a profound, absorbing passion, such as one reads of, and wishes for. I am dying to inspire such a passion: for all my swains, hitherto, have been either so silly with their constancy, or so easily consoled by their strong sense, that I am determined to look out for a genius. Genius and great sensibility are inseparable: and I would as soon build my house

beside a standing pool as marry a man without all the fine sensibilities. No, no, Captain Fitz Arthur is far too rational and self-commanded to suit me. Do you think I could ever make myself wretched about Captain Fitz Arthur? He is so straightforward and undisguised; so sure, too, never to do any thing wrong or foolish, — that it is quite hopeless to think of agitation on his account. Now don't you think that living all one's life with him would be like reading a good book? I should go to sleep over it!"

"Wicked girl! wicked girl!" repeated Mrs. Preston, smartly tapping her cheek. "I know you don't mean half this nonsense to be taken seriously. Nobody reads more good books than yourself, or would be half as angry to hear good books huffed. I believe you are using poor Delaval after the same fashion, flouting him with your saucy lips, and wrapping him up in your heart."

"Indeed, indeed, dear Mrs. Preston," replied Honoria, with instant earnestness, "if I know my own feelings, this is my

opinion of Captain Fitz Arthur:—his heart I think one of the best in the world, — his mind of the first order of merely rational minds, (for I doubt if he has much imagination,) — his principles, a rock, — his temper, as sweet as your own, — his fortune, far superior to what a portionless girl like me should pretend to, — his person, as God made it !”

“You little scornful, good-for-nothing” — interrupted Mrs. Preston, beating her again half in earnest; — for the shrugged-up shoulder and drawn-down lip of Honoria marked her estimate of Captain Fitz Arthur’s pretensions to manly beauty: — “Why, I vow to Heaven he is considered a very handsome man by every-body but yourself. If you have any quarrel with his features, tell me where you will see such a countenance, or eyes with half the sense, and sweetness, and nobleness of his ?”

“Well, I’ll grant you he *has* an amiable, benevolent face ; certainly I would run to it for protection in a crowd, — if I saw no other !” Honoria laughed at her

own bull, and her maternal friend resumed: — “I am glad you have the grace to own this. His figure, perhaps, you will have a fling at!”

“No, no, I leave his figure standing;” answered our heroine, her spirits rising; “abating a certain military swing and cadence of step; a sort of sway of the body and toss of the head, every now and then, as if balancing the long feather, I presume he wears in his hat when cap-à-pied in garrison; he is very tolerable in point of figure. I never should have found that out by myself, though; it was one of the Lady Lumleys’ admiration of him at his own ball, which I overheard, that made me take a good look at him; and then I saw that he was really *fait à peindre*, or *si hommasse*, as Bella would say.”

Mrs Preston, protesting against the use of French words, smilingly noticed what had preceded them. “Well! I see no reason for my favourite to despair yet: if you were going to marry Captain Fitz-Arthur to-morrow, you could not have

said more to prove he was to your taste. Charming countenance! fine figure! the best heart, sense, principle, and temper in the world! I don't see what you could have said more!"—and in the singleness of her own good heart, Mrs. Preston actually thought what she said.

Honorina cut her benevolent pleasure short, by exclaiming, — "Oh, my dear Mrs. Preston, have I told you I think him perfect in manly grace and beauty, with the light of genius in every look? Have I praised him for talents and accomplishments that make him the envy of one half of the world, and the admiration of the other? Have I said a single word of his eloquence-charm — fire — sensibility — subduing sensibility?"

"Mercy, my dear! you would have me think you mad!" was Mrs. Preston's artless exclamation: "We read of such things as all-accomplished Lovelaces, that dress themselves up, too, into Adonises; but your sterling good men are too busy with the work and worry of this hard-going world, to have time for learning to

cut capers like a figure-dancer, or to play on as many instruments as the band of a regiment."

"I know that, dearest Mrs. Preston," cried Honoria; "and that is precisely the reason why I insist upon genius in the man I am to marry. Genius is inspiration, — intuition! A man of universal genius has a talent for poetry, painting, and music born with him; so he requires no *time* to learn these divine arts. Give me genius, and I care not if I must live in a desert island with the possessor of it."

"Oh, my child, how little do you know yourself!" exclaimed the excellent Mrs. Preston: "you are too kind, too dear to many, to bear living only for one. I am mistaken if you could be happy without trying to make scores happy too. What power you would have if you were the mistress of Arthur's Court. Good Sir Everard doting on you so! Poor Hilton so fond of you! The dear Captain's heart so ready to outrun yours in every thing that is kind, and good, and gracious! O, if I shall live to see that

day!" Mrs. Preston's large benign eyes were floating in delightful tears as she spoke, and her voice was full of motherly emotion.

Honorina was afraid of infection; and rallying her spirits, she said gaily, — "Now why will you try to talk me into falling violently in love with — being the mistress of Arthur's Court? For, to say truth, the old house is more exactly to my fancy than the heir himself."

"Get you gone, foolish wronghead!" exclaimed Mrs. Preston, getting vexed for her favourite, and wishing to pique Honorina a very little: "I believe you are right to stop me: I ought not to wish you should like Captain Fitz Arthur; since I am rather led to think he is seriously endeavouring to prevent this affection from getting the better of him. If his father has really involved the estates, as people say he has, in truth it would be almost impossible for poor Delaval to marry without adding to the family troubles. However, this I will say for him, at any rate, — you may go all over the

world, and never meet with such another heart."

"Why then, after my pilgrimage is over," said Honoria lightly, "I'll come back and take it."

"And do you fancy it will stay and wait for you, saucebox?" asked the still rustic widow of Dr. Preston.

"O, if a man's love cannot stand a few years' trial, it is sorry stuff indeed. What water-gruel happiness must follow the marrying such a person!"

"Get you gone, I say, for a provoking, high-flown girl, that you are!" cried Mrs. Preston, flinging back Honoria's arms from the neck she was going to encircle in girlish playfulness and security of being loved. Mrs. Preston's benevolent countenance was red with the only sort of anger she could ever feel; that which boils up and sinks with the blood colouring the cheek. She tried to turn away; but Honoria forced herself upon her breast, crying out, — "Only forgive my flippancy, dear, dear Mamma Preston, and

I'll never jest again at your darling Delaval."

The endearing tone, the silver sweetness of the voice itself, the fond caress which accompanied them, and the very youthful face looking up in that of Mrs. Preston's, were not to be resisted. She pressed Honoria to her breast, repeating, "There, there! you are my own good child again."

Ere she could resume the subject, which she now hoped to treat with better success and more seriousness, Mrs. Preston's plain-liveried servant opened the door, announcing with the same breath, "Mrs. and Miss Matilda Shafto," and "Colonel Mason."

The latter was a well-drilled elderly soldier, commanding an infantry regiment quartered in the county.

Every thing about Colonel Mason was as thoroughly disciplined as himself. His belt, boots, queue, curls, had a more regimental air than those of any other officer. His black stock kept his head more

stiffly in the air : his doe-skin gloves held his fingers more firmly separate : he strode up to his best friend as if he were advancing to meet an enemy ; but, as he made the advance with that old-fashioned politesse which we are told caused one of our great commanders to take off his hat on the field, and apologize to his adversary for his future proceedings, the manner was rather gallant than alarming. The Colonel being known to have risen by merit alone, and to live upon his pay, was suffered to go at large through the county, without springes being set for him, or fear of his decoying any of its fair inhabitants to his quarters.

Colonel Mason was most felicitously plain and agreeable, and of such a determined age, that young ladies netted him purses, made him gorget-roses, invited him to sit by them, engaged him on their side in all their little causes, and openly quarrelled about his attractions before his face, with the most perfect security. He was the ally of the young men, and the escort of their fair sisters ; he kept

fathers and mothers in good humour by playing at cards, or listening to stories; he brought gossip for maiden aunts, and sugar-plums for little children; promoted parties; patronized strolling actors; lent his regimental band to help on a ball or a breakfast; managed to get persons asked where they had not previously visited; contrived accidental meetings between admirers and their admired; in short, did all manner of good-natured things, without ostentation; and made every one his friend without meanness.

Colonel Mason was neither a young man, nor a rich man, nor a clever man, nor an amusing man, nor a marrying man, — he was simply a cheerful man, of an obliging disposition, and, as such, he was a popular man.

As the Colonel did not belong to Mrs. Shafto, he kept politely in the rear, till that lady had gone through her usual evolutions of smile, curtsy, and caress, and was fairly seated: he then advanced boldly into the middle of Mrs. Preston's sunny parlour, bowing his neatly-pow-

dered head, and shewing a set of teeth that would have been called fine in a handsome mouth.

"Madam," he said, "I am here to give you the earliest intelligence against myself, that you may make dispositions accordingly. Some of my youngsters having nothing better to do, and finding the races are not to be this year, are going to run their horses on the Cuthbert Fell a fortnight hence; by way of excuse, I believe, for giving you ladies a collation and a dance afterwards; and they want to occupy your meadow, there, with their temporary dancing-room. I have told the foolish lads that they have just hit upon a scheme to lose both their money and their hearts on the same day; but they will hear nothing against their fancy. So may I petition for the loan of your field, and the pleasure of your, and the Miss Prestons' company on this great occasion?"

Mrs. Preston lost not a moment in granting one of the requests. Mrs. Shafto courteously complimented the Colonel upon the gallantry of his officers;

then inquired who were expected at their entertainment.

Nature having kindly enabled Colonel Mason to make the most of his white teeth, he now smiled again from end to end of his bronzed visage, while he replied, "Mrs. and the Miss Shaftos, — we hope ; and the rest of our hospitable friends in the county. Miss O'Hara," he continued, turning to our heroine, "I have not the honour of knowing Mrs. Meredith, but I hope *you* will condescend to grace —"

Mrs. Preston, seeing Honoria's colour heighten, as it always did when her aunt was alluded to before Mrs. Shafto, hastened to answer for her : "I will take care to secure you Miss O'Hara's countenance ; — her friends of St. Cuthbert's, or at Arthur's Court, will be too good to bring her to your gala ; — so you may spare me and my daughters. We shall be at Harrowgate then, I am sorry to say, and must positively go away a week before your races, as we regularly meet a sister of Dr. Preston's there, and cannot make any excuse."

Colonel Mason expressed sincere concern for the loss, and sincere pleasure for the grace announced by this sentence. Honoria, in compliance with his repeated intreaty, allowed him to expect her, either in the suite of Mrs. Fothergill, or in company with the Miss Mulcasters.

Mrs. Shafto, by way of hiding her own spleen, and raising that of the girl she had grown to hate, began to enumerate, with affected concern, the names of many agreeable men who would lose the pleasure of these new races by absence from the county. Amongst them she included Captain Fitz Arthur and Major Stanhope.

“Madam, I beg your pardon,” said the polite Colonel, — “we have indeed to regret Captain Fitz Arthur’s absence, but Major Stanhope will be here; he has let the party he came down with go back without him, and has got a fresh leave. I do not presume to guess *what* bright eyes detain him from his duty;” the Colonel glanced significantly at Ho-

nor, whose effect upon Major Stanhope he had noticed when in its fullest force at Arthur's Court.

"The Major is very guarded, then," observed Mrs. Shafto, glancing in her turn at her daughter's raw-paste face, which could not colour up on a signal, but which went very respectably through certain movements meant to indicate modest consciousness. "He never affords one an opportunity of guessing at his fair detainer,—for he seldom talks of any of our pretty neighbours, when he is so good as to lounge away a morning at Shafto Place. It is really vastly good of Major Stanhope to ride seven or eight miles to visit us. We are so very stupid just now, — nothing going on, — not a creature with us! Indeed, Major Stanhope is the best bred young man of my acquaintance."

The complaisant Colonel could only bow and smile in civil acquiescence, as the merits of the lady's acquaintance were best known to herself. He was even so considerate as not to set her

right in her evident mistake about the number of Major Stanhope's visits, — the mistake being in favour of the young officer's gallantry, if not of his taste.

Mrs. Shafto continued, — "Major Stanhope *did* talk of driving over some Sunday to go to church with us, to see the old monuments, and the curious tower, — but somehow he did not come. Had he ever heard Mr. Meredith preach, I am sure he would not have continued to think there was no temptation there." Mrs. Shafto's half-condescending, half-insulting bow to our heroine, was neither unmarked nor unfelt; — yet its meaning could not wound one indifferent to the Major. Startled by her coolness, into the apprehension of a perfect understanding between the two objects of her present manœuvre, Mrs. Shafto added, with the tone of a question, "I do not think the Major is personally acquainted with our worthy rector?"

Honoraria had no right to suppose the question intended for her; and she kept

silent. Mrs. Preston was obliged to satisfy her guest's curiosity, by herself putting the direct question to her young friend. Honoria calmly replied, — "Major Stanhope does not visit at my uncle's;"—and by the composure with which she avowed what Mrs. Shafto thought must be a mortifying fact, excited another set of uneasy feelings in that lady. Miss O'Hara, she concluded, must have designs upon Captain Fitz Arthur. She was determined to frustrate them.

Mrs. Shafto had shrewdness to perceive, and adroitness enough to gather from her intercourse with Mrs. Meredith, that pride had a great share in the composition of the Irish orphan: nothing was so likely to succeed, therefore, as piquing that pride. She suddenly changed the subject, by asking the Colonel if he had heard that Captain Fitz Arthur was going to quit the army? adding, the report must delight all the young ladies who had designs upon his hand; laying a marked emphasis on the last word.

"His heart, I think you must mean," observed Mrs. Preston, with benevolent reproof.

"Pardon me, my dear madam," resumed Mrs. Shafto, who never failed to mark the original disparity between their ranks, by assuming an air of studied condescension; "I believe if the rich hand is obtained now-a-days, the heart may be dispensed with. I mean where ^{and} young women are without fortune, ~~are~~ unhappily taken out of their proper sphere to mix with persons above their condition. Such girls contract tastes and habits which they can only continue to indulge by securing a good establishment; they naturally, therefore, —"

Mrs. Preston interrupted the cruel venom of this speech, by remarking, "That she thanked Heaven she was unacquainted with any young women to whom this description could be applied; so she supposed Captain Fitz Arthur was not in great danger, since his fair enemies must be too distant to carry on their measures very effectively!"

Honorina, against whom all Mrs. Shafto's spleen was directed, would not have discovered its exact meaning, but for her zealous friend's quicker perception. Seeing Mrs. Preston's colour rise, hers rose too; for now she caught the intended affront: and, while turning the full light of her eyes upon the offender, she gave her in one look the whole weight of her indignation.

Honorina had no mean faults, — all hers were of greater magnitude: she laughed at the Miss Shaftos' supercilious glances on her simple dress, and her *patten'd and umbrella'd* walk to church on wet Sundays; but she could not brook the insult of being almost taxed with designs upon a man, merely because he was richer than herself. Pride was roused by such suspicion — delicacy wounded; — at the moment, it must be confessed, she wished, with her whole heart, that Captain Fitz-Arthur might offer her his hand, that she might have the haughty satisfaction of knowing she had refused him.

Mrs. Shafto's malice had fully suc-

ceeded : it had stifled justice, generosity, tenderness for others ; — it had completely given the victory to self, in a young breast, hitherto filled solely by kind affections ; it had made Honoria, for the time, unworthy of the love she was anxious to have avowed, only that she might reject it. Such is the direful power of one human being over another ! The evil purposer finds his instruments — frailties and passions — within the bosom of his victim : if he knows to wield them skilfully, his success is sure ; — at least over those who have not yet learned to “ watch and pray unceasingly.”

Mrs. Shafto, satisfied of triumph, merely smiled her unsatisfactory reply to Mrs. Preston's simple defence of her covertly-attacked young friend ; while Colonel Mason, not at all in the secret of this little skirmish, renewed the subject of Captain Fitz Arthur's intention to quit the army ; expressing great doubts of the report being true ; and lamenting it, if it were so, with all the energy of military eloquence and ardour.

In Colonel Mason's eyes there was no profession worthy of a man except that of arms ; nobody was, in his opinion, fit to live, that was not eager to die. Having neither father nor mother, brothers nor sisters, wife nor children, houses nor land, nor other dependents than his soldiers ; nor live stock except his horse ; he could not understand the possibility of balancing any number of inferior duties against the paramount one of obeying his king and serving his country. He, therefore, after having duly descanted upon the duties and honour of a soldier, decidedly refused crediting the report of Captain Fitz Arthur's desertion from that dignified character ; and, most unluckily, turning to Honoria and Miss Matilda Shafto, who had hitherto performed the parts of mutes, inquired what the young ladies thought upon the subject.

"O, I am of Mamma's opinion, of course," answered Miss Matilda ; forgetting that the two last words were *an aside*. Honoria's feelings were yet in rebellion ; and, thinking of poor Fitz Arthur only as Mrs.

Shafto's relation, she said hastily, — "I believe it is considered wrong in a man to quit the army while he is young, and his country at war — so I am really sorry to find Captain Fitz Arthur is going to do so."

Whether Miss O'Hara did or did not care as little for Captain Fitz Arthur as the indifference with which she spoke implied, was nothing to Mrs. Shafto; it was enough for the latter lady that Honoria was piqued into an open censure of her lover's conduct, and avowed her credence of the report. She coolly resumed: "A bit of news I heard yesterday may perhaps have had something to do with this matter. That odd Mrs. Letitia Bronspeth of Aylecliffe Castle died last month at Bath, and has left all her property to that Miss Clavering, who was the Beauty at Arthur's Court on Sir Everard's birthday."

"And we are to understand from this —?" questioned Colonel Mason, inclining the ram-rod perpendicular of his

belted body towards the speaker, with serious attention.

“Positively nothing further, upon *my* authority, my good sir,” exclaimed Mrs. Shafto, “than that Captain Fitz Arthur was Miss Clavering’s father’s aid-de-camp in India; that she was then a fascinating girl of sixteen, too young for any thing more serious than losing her own heart, perhaps, and winning another person’s unconsciously, and that she is now a charming young woman, nearly twenty-one, her own mistress, with enormous estates, not a hundred miles from Arthur’s Court.”

“Well! if these are the Captain’s views, I wish him success!” said the Colonel, stiffly resuming his perpendicular; “but I had rather that the gallant fellow, who distinguished himself so finely at the Pass of Tappore, and the battle of the Black Rocks, preferred the honour of the British arms, to a wife and a castle.”

“My dear sir!” cried Mrs Shafto, imploringly, “you must not quote *me* as

speaking *officially* on this subject. I *can't* speak positively, for I won't know anything. I merely put two and two together, like other folks. I confess I wish the thing, because we all know how sadly Sir Everard has hampered himself by his excessive liberality and carelessness. I know Captain Fitz Arthur's high notions of duty will lead him to look for fortune in a wife, that he may repair the family property; he has such fine principles, that I am sure he would never think of consulting inclination in such an important concern as marriage."

Honoraria actually stared at this extraordinary commendation: but as it was purely a stare of astonishment, Mrs. Shafto went calmly on, detailing *her* notions of duty and virtue; — notions so worldly, so heartless, so entirely the result of a life devoted to appearances, and of feelings callous to every natural enjoyment, that even Mrs. Preston's indulgent nature could no longer afford her a silent hearing; and by frequently breaking in

upon the picture, she succeeded finally in driving her away.

Colonel Mason remained awhile to talk over the projected races : he was induced to stay dinner ; other visitants dropt in towards the evening ; so that Honoria escaped the renewal of a subject she was but ill-inclined to converse upon, the passion and merits of Captain Fitz Arthur, and returned home more indignant at Mrs. Shafto, and more disdainful of becoming connected with her through Fitz Arthur's means, than she had ever before been conscious of.

CHAP. II.

CAPTAIN Fitz Arthur's absence was prolonged nearly four weeks: during that period much had occurred in the little world of Edenfell.

A most decided friendship had taken place between our heroine and Miss Jane Mulcaster; it had proceeded to such lengths, that the former, after spending several days at St. Cuthberts, was invited to come again, and spend weeks, before the dean went thence, to keep what was called his *residence* in the cathedral city, to which his deanery belonged.

The friendship, however, was yet, principally on the side of Jane: that is, she was the person to tell all the little secrets; to ask advice; claim sympathy; and haunt the privacy of the other. Honoria's character was on too great a scale to have petty secrets to communicate

so she confided nothing : but Jane's affectionate, generous spirit, grew so fast upon her liking, that she was never wearied by her visitations.

Jane was now in love, and in difficulties; her swain was in the army; and papa always wished his daughters to marry clergymen, since his only son declined going into the church : — therefore, she was afraid of giving Major Stanhope leave to propose for her, — yet, *he was so very much attached to her, and she did care a little for him.* Her first confessions did not exceed this moderate description of regard : — then, *she cared a great deal ;* at length, she came to own, that *she felt she never should care for anybody else.*

“ Major Stanhope,” exclaims a fair reader, “ why he is in love with the heroine !” I beg leave to answer *he was ;* or rather, he was struck a little, not penetrated : he was checked on the threshold of a sudden fancy, by that mixture of *mauvaise honte*, and that delicate aversion to coarse-mannered connections, which had enabled Mrs. Shafto to succeed, while drawing his attention to Miss

O'Hara's ill-bred aunt, and boldly taxing him with his admiration of the young lady herself."

Jane Mulcaster, having witnessed Mrs. Shafto's manœuvres at the ball, and heard her malicious remarks since then, was determined to render these stratagems abortive, by winning the lover back for the portionless and deserving orphan. Major Stanhope was slightly known to her brother, and her brother was as eager to spite Mrs. Shafto, as she was to elevate her new friend; so a greater degree of intimacy was easily brought about.

Fortune favored the scheme, it appeared; for the —— Hunt was in their immediate neighbourhood, by which means the Major was what she termed easily *come-at-able*. For the honour of my own sex it must be averred, that never were intentions purer, or zeal more disinterested, than Jane Mulcaster's, when she began to put them into action. Major Stanhope was asked to St. Cuthberts, and he came; came frequently: the innocent girl flew at him with honest warmth for Miss

O'Hara's sake; she talked to him of Miss O'Hara, — she invited Miss O'Hara to St. Cuthberts : never was benevolence purer!

But as it often happens, a young lady talks to a man of another young lady till she makes him in love with herself: and sometimes she talks away her own heart meanwhile.

So it happened in the present instance. Stanhope had natural good sense, and sounder notions than most men have at his age, of what qualities in a woman are likely to render the happiness of the married state permanent: he had the blessing of a valuable mother, and from her he learnt to estimate the female character: his heart was impressible; his impressions from beauty vivid; he first admired, and then loved Jane Mulcaster.

Her generous zeal in the cause of Honor O'Hara was too ill-disguised by her artless attempts at careless commendation, not to glare in his eyes. At first he laughed at it to himself, and turned it aside; then listened for the sake of hearing what it was that Jane Mulcaster

thought most worthy of praise. By such means he acquired a light by which to examine her character in turn. It stood the test of such examination ; and if she soon appeared to him the loveliest and brightest ornament of public assemblies, she became yet lovelier to his sight in the dear sanctuary of home. So beloved as she was there by all its roof sheltered, and so admired by all who frequented it, he could not allow himself to marvel at her being always in good-humour : but to behold the petted child, the yielding sister, and to see her continually refusing, with generous nobleness, to take advantage of her father's partiality, was something so rare and magnanimous, that he believed no other corner of the globe contained such a heart, in such a beautiful form.

Perhaps the influence of general family amiableness is not sufficiently understood, ^{surely} ~~rarely~~ as it is felt : the harmony, happiness, and elegancies of Jane Mulcaster's home speedily became, in her lover's idea, parts of herself : and the blooming ar-

dent-mannered girl was little aware how much she owed of her charm, to the pious and pleasant father.

There is a great deal of reflected lustre in every agreeable family : even on the score of person, as well as character. For many a merely nice-looking girl has all the honors of beauty awarded her, from being grouped with three or four sisters decidedly pretty. Nothing could be more favorable to the growth of a particular inclination for one of its members, than a frequent view of the family circle at St. Cuthberts.

So many young, and blooming, and happy faces!—so much affection, and good humour, and good spirits!—and the certainty of so much real goodness existing in every heart there! The family vein too, was very agreeable ; not strong enough to be called humour, nor ever fine enough for wit : it just amounted to pleasantry.

This pleasantry was found upon examination, to consist of indifferent materials : such as quaint phraseology, ridi-

culous modes of displaying resemblances between things and persons ; acute remarks upon character and conduct concealed under an amusing affectation of praise or blame : but such slight materials, adroitly assisted by a happy variety of looks, and tones, and gestures, often produced very comic effects.

In William Mulcaster, the ore of the family vein ran the richest, or at least lay nearest the surface ; and as he never wanted or waited for applause, while passing on from one gay nonsense to another, that very carelessness gave peculiar zest to his sallies.

Major Stanhope being always too timid to attempt giving a lively impulse in society, though formed to enjoy and advance such an impulse when given by others, was exactly the person to be captivated by this family character ; and in his eyes, therefore, every one of Jane Mulcaster's relations had a positive charm.

He saw, also, nothing but what was right and respectable in what Mrs. Shafto had deprecated in his hearing, the Dean's

kindly habit of receiving with hospitable welcome, all the poorer clergy of the diocese, and all the emigrants scattered by the French Revolution over Northumberland, in common with other counties.

Though brought constantly to the house by her brother, and obviously sought by Jane, not a particle of flattered vanity had any thing to do with the sudden yet sincere attachment Major Stanhope conceived for her. Conscious that her original purpose was to revive his wish of knowing Miss O'Hara better, he was too diffident of his own merit to suspect that she was beginning to wish he might continue that strange indifference about the pretty Honoria's expected visit at St. Cuthberts, which had so lately provoked her.

At that time, however, Jane's heart was unknown to herself; and when he actually excused himself under some frivolous pretence from meeting Miss O'Hara, the first day she dined there, her instant accusation of his having transferred his admiration to one of "the horrid

Misses Shafto, with their arms like fishing-rods," extorted his secret. Ere Honoria arrived, the blushing, palpitating Jane had got volumes of tendernesses and transports, hopes and fears, prospects and plans, to make the confidence of to her friend.

An easy-tempered elder sister's rule over sisters only a few years younger than herself, could not be supposed a very strict one: in truth, the three junior Misses Mulcaster followed their own harmless humours pretty frequently, without let or molestation. Jane, therefore, was left to manage her own love-affair after her own fashion; that is, no one except her brother either saw or taxed her with having a love-affair in hand.

To Honoria she voluntarily confided it, as Major Stanhope had honourably done to William Mulcaster. Scarcely eighteen, Honoria was not the best counsellor in the world for one of the same age; since she knew as little of the world by experience, as she who sought her counsel: but her natural judgment was

sounder ; and if she could not teach prudence, she was sure not to inculcate deceit.

It was clear even to her shallow knowledge of such subjects, that Major Stanhope would be considered to have begun at the wrong end ; and that he should not have attempted carrying the young lady, before he had secured the old gentleman. But every fault of love brings its excuse with it, to a young heart. She knew that Stanhope was surprised into the declaration, therefore worthy of pardon.

It was soon settled by this small junta, that without attempting the slightest concealment of the sentiment which principally actuated him, the Major was to go on improving the Dean's evident prepossession in his favor, by a continuance of those unaffected attentions, and that respectful deference, which are so pleasing from youth to age. If the worthy dignitary appeared still better pleased with his son's military friend, then the question might be asked : if he did not, the fair Jane would *give it all up, and live and die single !*

The Major of course took his oath of celibacy upon the same terms, with equal fervor and complacency.

The step preparatory to these arrangements was that of asking the consent of Major Stanhope's family. This, the lover vehemently insisted, would prove a mere form: for his father was the best father in the world, (saving only the Dean of ———,) and he left him a free agent on all important occasions; and Miss Mulcaster's birth, connections, and fortune were unexceptionable — her individual self beyond valuation — how then could there be a doubt of consent? However, the form of such a consent was one of those credentials necessary to produce, when the lover should sue for his mistress's hand; and William Mulcaster would not allow of a single drive in Stanhope's tandem, (upon which poor Jane had set her girlish heart, for the mere sake of being frightened in his company, and assured by his presence,) until this momentous document should arrive. It was written for, therefore, most

eagerly ; and was actually upon the road, travelling in the same mail with Captain Fitz Arthur, when he returned to his home.

This promising attachment was one of the events that had taken place during Fitz Arthur's absence : one more important, since it produced a vital effect upon his own happiness, occurred within a fortnight after his departure.

The natural graces of Honor O'Hara, her orphan state, her slender provision, her uncle's respected character, — nay, the very coarseness of Mrs. Meredith, and the squalid disorderliness of the house so sweet a creature was doomed to inhabit, were reasons with the good-hearted, to bring her forward, and show her kindness ; but with Mrs. Shafto, and a few envious misses, and snare-setting mothers, they were reasons for the exact contrary ; and, aided by such auxiliaries, Mrs. Shafto proceeded in the laudable resolution of putting Miss O'Hara down.

Since this pretender had been "*taken up* by the Dean of ———'s very popular

family, and carried about by Mrs. Preston, (who, though she was *canaille*, had got the *entrée* any where,) there was no saying where her impertinences and usurpations would end!" It was now known, for the laird had told it himself, without charge of secrecy, that Honoria had *refused Frazer of Dunraven!*" This circumstance, demonstrating her freedom from mercenary motives, had set easy-hearted parents at rest about their sons. Mrs. Shafto shrewdly believed it might render the girl more formidable to some sort of young men; and that the hearts, which no trick could catch, might voluntarily surrender themselves to undesigning loveliness.

Mrs. Shafto's notion of those she deemed her inferiors, was something like that of the ladies belonging to the ancient Pairie of France. She thought nothing so easy as the disposal of an inferior's hand in marriage: at least she thought nothing ought to be so easy to *a great lady*. Quite satisfied, that if Mr. Frazer *had* offered his hand to Miss O'Hara, he had

made the proposal, and received the refusal, without her uncle's knowledge, she deemed it almost impossible for Mr. Meredith to decline obliging the girl to marry, if a fit suitor appeared, and applied first to him : — the thing would be *quite* impossible, if that suitor's proposal were previously recommended by a person of consequence ; condescending, at the time, to express themselves as a friend.

Resolving to make Sir Everard Fitz Arthur this person, and to work underground herself, by getting Mrs. Meredith for an unconscious ally, Mrs. Shafto made a visit to Arthur's Court. Her reasons for wishing so to dispose of our heroine must be obvious.

Mrs. Shafto, on the present occasion, prepared the ground for herself, by *making the agreeable* in every way, and upon every subject, to the simple-hearted baronet. He was used to speak of her as a good kind of fantastic woman enough, that would be all the better, if she would not ape the real finely-bred lady at Ravenshaw ; meaning the Dow-

ager Countess of Wearmouth. He now received her with the cordiality of old-fashioned relationship. Mrs. Shaftopraised the late arrangements at Arthur's Court, repeating all that the neighbours *did* say, and more that they did *not* say, in eulogium of Captain Fitz Arthur. According to her account, even fools and villains understood and lauded his "sober-suited" excellence. Good Sir Everard was yet but in his horn-book in the science of mankind ; so believing it quite natural for knaves to love the virtue which disclaimed, and the penetration which unmasked them, he lent delighted and thankful attention to her flattery.

His heart was thoroughly warmed by her, when advancing to one of the deep massy windows of the front, Mrs. Shafto looked out upon the diminished park, as if to admire the successive sunshine and shadow of an April sky chequering the distant meadow and corn lands. Perched on the top of a hill, covered with meagre plantations of infant trees, a new white house, with a fancy colonnade of thin,

painted pilasters, caught her eye, and she complacently exclaimed, "Really Chaplin gets on prodigiously! We will not enquire how our agents contrive these things, that is Mr. Shafto's and Sir Thomas Sykes's affair; but now he may certainly be considered one of the under gentry. I lament that he has not more sense than to let his eldest son intrude into my Lord ———'s hunt. To be sure the young man is properly respectful; and whenever one meets him upon his fine hunter, draws up to the roadside, and waits, with his hat off, till we have passed."

"A foolish, good-for-nothing puppy for all that!" observed Sir Everard. "Abbot tells me we should be amazed if we could hear him amongst his own companions: talking of us all by our Surnames or Christian names, as if he were hail-fellow-well-met, with the whole county. It is Charley Raby, and Will Mulcaster, and the pretty Lumley girls — meaning the Ladies Lumley, I'd have you to know: — and Jane Mulcaster —

and Honor O'Hara. I dare say I am the old fool at Arthur's Court, and you the would-be-fine-lady of Shafto Place."

"I dare say we are," quietly answered Mrs. Shafto, her heart gangrening the while: "but surely, Sir Everard, one of the young women you have mentioned is quite in his line. Miss O'Hara is just the sort of person our agent's son might pretend to as a wife."

"The deuce she is!"

"Certainly. She has the misfortune of belonging to low people, as well as he; and if his uncle is a dry-salter or an oilman in London — I'm sure I don't know which, but I suppose they are both alike, — her aunt's father was a colliery captain, and her uncle a petty farmer, and her aunt a poor sempstress, I believe, in a garret at Burton's the grocer's."

"Upon my life, my good lady, somebody has been stuffing you with a pack of lies," interrupted Sir Everard, with more warmth than decorum, "Miss O'Hara, to my knowledge, has no uncle that is a farmer, nor aunt a needle-woman. The

Merediths are an old Yorkshire family, of substance and station, of which our worthy rector is the younger son of a younger son, — so cannot have much of their money. Mr. Meredith has only one brother alive, and he is chief judge at Madras, or Bombay, or somewhere in India; and I never heard of any aunt of Miss O'Hara's except the old lady in Ireland, that left her what she has, and lived there in the very handsomest way for a single woman."

"My dear sir, you quite mistook me. I was glancing at Mrs. Meredith's pedigree. I do not say Mrs. Meredith's relations are Miss O'Hara's relations, but you will allow they are connections; and I tell you fairly my sole reason for not noticing Miss O'Hara, was the extreme awkwardness of doing so, without taking her vulgar aunt into our visiting-book, to have carried the Misses Shafto where they might have met the sons of their father's servant, (which a land steward may be called,) as parts of the company, was quite impossible. You must allow that as

prejudices, nay propriety, go, no considerate mother could wish such a thing."

"No, certainly, — no," hesitated the candid Baronet, "that would be an awkwardness. The young Chaplins must manage a settlement in another county, if they hope to turn their money and education to account, and get into good society; and as folks say Chaplin has given one of them at least, a college touch, I don't see why they might not."

"Neither do I," returned his wily visitor; "Chaplin talks of putting the eldest into the church, and buying him a living somewhere. Now if he did this, and young Chaplin married Miss O'Hara, that sweet girl would be comfortably provided for, surely quite suitably; for what more honourable calling than that of the church! She would then be taken out of the way of being injured by many idle reports now circulating, of her doing this, and saying that, to take in the thoughtless heirs of the county. It would only be kind and charitable in you, Sir Everard, to speak to Mr. Mere-

dith on this subject. I know that a little encouragement from our worthy pastor is all that is necessary to make Chaplin propose one of his sons. I really wish to bring about a creditable marriage for this pretty young woman ; since she has now got the character of being very forward and presuming, and being ready to run down all the gentlemen's throats. It is vastly cruel and unfeeling, and all that, in the young men : — *I* say, she is only carried away by too much spirits, and I have said every thing I could to Chaplin to do away his first demur at her want of fortune. I have puffed her blood-relations a good deal."

"You are very kind, really very kind!" exclaimed the Baronet, "poor dear ! So they call that pretty playfulness, and innocent openness of her's, forwardness ! and they say she wants to take in the heirs of us old squires ! I can answer for it she don't want to take in my son ! and I hope he is as well worth looking after, as most in the county ; for since he came from India, she has come once of her

own accord to Arthur's Court, for ten times that she used to do before he came. Mrs. Fothergill and I were always so fond of having her to amuse poor Hylton. Now, she never comes to pass a whole day except when we are by ourselves, which now I mind me, is when Delaval is from home."

"O, the idle report goes," returned Mrs. Shafto, carelessly, "that Captain Fitz Arthur is not to her taste; he is too grave, and too cold, though she owns he is dying for her; and he is above all, too frugal. This is the sort of idle impertinence, my dear sir, which other silly girls, who call themselves Miss O'Hara's confidants, make for her. They really ought not to repeat such little thoughtless sallies."

Sir Everard's face was by this time, like a flambeau; for the moment during which this blasphemy against his beloved son was uttered, he felt the mere repetition of it, nearly as great an insult as the first conception, and he was ready to break forth into angry remonstrance with Mrs. Shafto herself; but recollecting

their relationship, and remembering many a testimony of Honoria's respect for him and his son, he exclaimed, "Pshaw! stuff, indeed, my good madam! I don't believe one word of it, though you do; but I'll go to the bottom of the story; I'll see who dare say Delaval Fitz Arthur is dying for a woman that don't care for him."

Mrs. Shafto believing she had now stirred up the Baronet's blood to a proper pitch, refrained from uttering more than insinuations against the hated Miss O'Hara. No stimulus she thought could now be wanting to make him try to get this dangerous girl out of his son's way, and at the same time lower her presumption, by urging Mr. Meredith to encourage a proposal from one of the younger Messrs. Chaplin. Mrs. Shafto's card now was to affect charitable feelings.

"I need not pray you, my dear sir," she said, "to be tender of the poor ill-taught girl's situation in society. If she has said anything in the levity of youth, and the surprise of being so suddenly

set up, which could amount to a pertness on the subject of Captain Fitz Arthur, surely it would be inflicting useless pain upon worthy Mr. Meredith to name it to him: that could do no good, and as for the poor young woman herself, one would spare her, in consideration of her very neglected education, and the very ill-judged notice that has been taken of her of late. It will be much better to let her down quietly, without any stir about this county gossip of what she says. Getting her a good husband in her own way of life, will be the very noblest revenge possible."

Mrs. Shafto stopped smiling. Sir Everard sat as if quite lost in thought; then gravely rising, after a silence of some duration, said emphatically, "Leave the matter to me, madam. Depend upon it, if it turns out as I begin to suspect it will, I'll follow your advice, and make it my business to help the young lady to a good husband."

Garrick himself, had he been extant then, could not have made a better exit.

As if an author had prepared it for him, the butler entered to remind his master of an engagement with a man of business; and Sir Everard courteously bowing to his kinswoman, quitted the room without being obliged to enter into further explanation. Mrs. Shafto was under the necessity of ordering up her carriage.

The Baronet's head was not even as moderately clear as usual, whilst talking with this man of the law : it was in fact, full of much nearer and dearer concerns. He was thinking with a melting heart, of his own affections in early life, — of all that his beloved son had been suffering, and sacrificing for him and his younger children; of that mixed delicacy and proper pride which, operating in the breast of one so poor and high-principled as the niece of their rector, might well account for her apparent avoidance of his coveted heir : he was thinking too of his own pecuniary affairs, and torturing his brain to discover some mode of making a generous and grateful act, practicable to himself.

Every-day business and the attorney dismissed, Sir Everard betook himself to such a task, of seriously considering probabilities and improbabilities, fit and unfit ways and means, as had never held him so long before, under any circumstance of his own life. Hitherto, he had been too apt to act from momentary impulse; but the happiness of his darling son was said to be at stake, and no effort of heart or head seemed now above the powers of a grateful and obliged father.

He first pondered over every past occurrence, which could throw a light upon the supposed passion of his son for Miss O'Hara, and upon the nature of her sentiments towards him. The more he reflected, the more he became convinced that his son was deeply attached to the charming Honoria, and that her alleged impertinences on the subject, were but parts of that system of concealment in affairs of the heart, which is recommended to all women, and which is demanded by propriety, while the gentleman's affection is

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unacknowledged. Although she certainly did frequent Arthur's Court much less than formerly, the lively pleasure she always showed there, proved that inclination had no share in keeping her away : here then was generous, disinterested liking discoverable. Sir Everard, in the true spirit of his romantic race, longed to recompense it by the best gift in his possession.

In the course of an hour he had completely made up his mind as to what he ought to think and what he ought to do. He then sat down to his writing-desk, and, taking a fair sheet of thick gilt-edged paper and a new crow-quill, wrote in rather an indifferent Italian hand, the following letter : —

*To His Grace the Duke of * * .*

My dear Lord Duke,

I have taken the liberty to change my mind since Your Grace's last proposal, for the four Raphaels ; so, if Your Grace have still a fancy for having them, they are at Your Grace's command, for the same

money my uncle gave for them abroad forty years ago.

I have the honour to remain,

My dear Lord Duke,

Your Grace's very faithful friend,
and very humble servant,

EVERARD FITZARTHUR.

This epistle sealed with the Fitz Arthur Arms, of many quarterings, was despatched by a man and horse to * *, on the instant, while Sir Everard ordered his dinner to be served in the small eating-room; the pictures destined for transportation being in the larger one.

An hour afterwards, he sat down in this small room, not to eat, but to look on the table; not to see there, plates and dishes curiously arranged after the best approved marshalling of the most noted cookery-book; but to behold in the glass of memory the graceful person of his first wife, as seeing those pictures for the first time, when he brought her a bride to Arthur's Court, she stood admiring and praising them. His bride's

praises had sanctified these pictures to him, who never till then had cast upon his godfather's noble legacy a single glance of triumph in their possession.

Since that hour he had ever beheld them with a feeling which the most perfect connoisseur could not have understood; though they might have mistaken it for an admiration purely bestowed upon four of the finest specimens of Raphael's angelic pencil. Sir Everard now thought of his letter despatched to His Grace of * *, as he would have contemplated the signing of a forced bill of divorce from his young and lovely partner, had she been then living, and that in the first month of their union.

But to clear one estate for Delaval, and so repair part of the injury which his own prodigal good-nature had done that excellent son, was an aim which redeemed the apparent impiety of thus parting from what he had so long identified in his thoughts with the memory of a beloved first wife.

Much, however, as Sir Everard coveted

money at this juncture, much as he needed it, he could not bring the honourable pride of a gentleman and the honesty of a man, to what he called the degrading act of huckstering his pictures. "I transfer them (he afterwards said to His Grace of * *), I don't traffic them away. I should never be able to look Your Grace in the face as gentleman ought to do gentleman, if I made one penny by their transfer beyond their original cost to my uncle." Such were the notions of an old-fashioned baronet, in old-fashioned times!

After this day's transactions, Sir Everard neither spoke to Mr. Meredith of young Chaplin, nor to Honoria of his disdained Delaval; he kept close in Arthur's Court, seeing to the careful taking down and packing up of the regretted pictures, ordering the redemption of his Cumberland estate with the money thus raised, and getting writings ready which were to transfer it, during his life, solely to the use of his eldest son. Never did

Sir Everard conduct any matter so orderly and with such privacy.

Meanwhile the party of long-expected rank and fashion, arrived at Ravenshaw. Expectation was, as usual, disappointed: it comprised only the dowager countess, and her married son, without his distinguished wife; and two middle-aged, plain men, *sans* titles.

What a party for races, and a *déjeûné*! What a blank in Mrs. Shafto's lottery for her daughters! However, upon enquiry, matters turned out better than they seemed,—a discovery we often make after our first vexation of disappointment has evaporated. The two plain men were both single men; they were in *The House*; they held great places under government;—in short, they were worth looking after.

Mrs. Shafto heard that Lady Wearmouth was seriously indisposed, the very morning after her return to a home, once crowded by young and blooming faces, now covered with the ashes of the grave. Lady Wearmouth had lost several chil-

dren, and the last had fallen on the field of war. She could not be expected to revisit the residence where she had borne and nursed these children, without yielding for a while, at least, to subduing recollections.

Mrs. Shafto took the cue of sensibility from the gossip of her female attendant, who had it from Lady Wearmouth's own woman; and most particular enquiries after Lady Wearmouth's health and spirits were therefore made by Mrs. Shafto in person, at the very door of Ravenshaw.

Honoraria, who had just been released from a week's confinement to her uncle's sick room, (Mr. Meredith having had a feverish cold,) heard with youthful delight of the *great family's* arrival: as Mr. William Mulcaster constantly assured her his friend Mr. Peter Gubbins would certainly accompany or join them, and that if he did, she would as certainly see him at St. Cuthberts.

While confined to her uncle's chamber, Honoraria had been reading nothing

but her Knight of the Shamrock's poems, and thinking of him every spare moment with restless curiosity. She had actually registered in her memory the young poet's polished forehead, and sculpture-like eye-bone : (connoisseurs know what vast sense and beauty are to be found in that important projection :) she had the tone of his voice still ringing in her ear ; she remembered that it had startled her with its melancholy music : and, in consequence of these remembrances, she gave herself up to the visions of uncurbed imagination. Mr. Gubbins was not long of rivalling in her fancy, both the marble image, and the fabled powers of the Grecian Apollo.

She had just got by heart one of Mr. Gubbins's best odes, an address of Leonidas to his soldiers, when she heard that Captain Fitz Arthur was returning to Arthur's Court, that he had sold out of the army, and was going to stupefy as a country gentleman. To her, whose prejudices were in favour of every brilliant career in life, whose studies had taught

her to admire fame won at the cannon's mouth, and who besides loved the name of soldier because her father had borne it ; to her, this news was a source of bitter disappointment and regret.

To think that Captain Fitz Arthur, whom she was beginning to like so very much, should at such a period as the present prefer inglorious security to enterprise and honorable danger ! to think he could endure the odium of deserting the ranks of his country, when she was actually at war with one enemy, and about to grapple with another ! to sit down in an easy chair, and look on ! — poor Fitz Arthur sunk fathoms in her opinion. “She was so vexed, — she could not say how vexed she was, — it was quite absurd to be so vexed ! She thought, therefore, how impossible it would be for her to marry any one whom she could not look up to with sentiments of adoration : since she could be made so very uncomfortable by the falling off of a mere friend, what would be her anguish to discover imperfection in a husband ?”

Honorina was in truth too much pained by Captain Fitz Arthur's supposed delinquency to mention her feeling to any one; she felt ashamed at being so concerned about a person who had evidently one very pitiful point in his character. It was apparent, she thought, that Captain Fitz Arthur was not a brave man, though he had done his duty as an officer when actually in the field; and if she communicated this opinion to a third person, she would be pledging herself to despise and disregard him, and of that she found herself perversely incapable.

When will that dark curtain rise which is to show by its rising, the performance of all that have performed, and do perform, in this awful drama of life? When shall we know who have been the truly great, the good, the wise of our earth? When shall we learn to demonstration, that actions are nothing separated from noble motives; that the most splendid deeds of valour — the sublimest treatises upon virtue — are but show and sound, unless the aim of

the one be to benefit mankind, the inspiration of the other, a soul earnestly striving to be the thing it admires !

Could Honoria have known how Captain Fitz Arthur had been employed while she was leaning half-enamoured over vain verses about love, glory, and patriotism, she would have retracted her unjust sentence with contrite tears. She would have seen him quenching a soldier's honourable ambition from a sense of duty to his parent, and tenderness for his brothers ; she would have seen him exercising the greatest degree of moral courage, while persisting in one determined line of conduct with a man well skilled to sneer, or insult, or intreat, a feebler nature out of its best purpose, as he saw occasion ; and dealing gently with a wretch incapable of one compunctious feeling, from that generous movement in his own breast, which made him incredulous of complete depravity in another's.

After infinite trouble, Fitz Arthur had

found Mr. Stephen in London, living with a mistress, not a wife ; not undertaking the management of a mercantile speculation destined for America, but connected with a set of gamblers by profession ; and about to launch the last money obtained from Sir Everard, in the disgraceful establishment of a gaming house.

It was no easy task for Fitz Arthur, in his conversation with a man whom the dignity of virtue forbade him to conciliate, to preserve himself from receiving such affronts as must have called forth a chastisement, which to give, would be to dishonour himself ; yet which, under some circumstances, three-fourths of the world would have loudly called for. Rather than have gone into the presence of a vile person, whom he must coolly tax with baseness, falsehood, and extortion, he would have faced a whole army of such cannon, as Honoria did him the grace of thinking him glad to escape from ; so repugnant was it to the na-

ture of Delaval Fitz Arthur, to overwhelm a fellow creature with a sense of their own vileness.

Happily the cowardice of guilt at first awed Mr. Stephen : on Captain Fitz Arthur's entrance he expected to have a severe reckoning demanded of him by the plundered heir of Sir Everard, and to hear of prosecution and imprisonment, for certain acts of fraudulent extortion. But when he found that no inquisition was to be made into the past, that his generous examiner gave him credit for some remnant of honest inclination, he was ashamed to dishonour such noble trust ; and immediately entering into confused details of former misfortunes, and lamentations of error, and unlucky attachments, afforded Fitz Arthur ample room for pressing on him the only plan with which he was likely to feel any satisfaction. This was to accept a commission in a regiment raising in Germany, for the protection of Hanover, where Fitz Arthur's interest insured him advancement, provided his public and pri-

vate conduct should be found to merit such favour. But one of the first conditions stipulated was, that he should part from the abandoned woman to whom he had lent his name, and to supply whose extravagance, Fitz Arthur, upon his own testimony, believed most of his disgraceful acts were performed.

Many were the difficulties which the worthless spendthrift threw in the way of this plan: but no alternative was offered him between its acceptance and a total banishment from every member of the Fitz Arthur family. He saw that Sir Everard would henceforth be guarded by the vigilant resolution of his eldest son, therefore be for ever placed out of his reach; and from his hand alone could he now expect any pecuniary succour. After much doubling and turning, he was at last obliged to give up all thought of escape, and to submit quietly.

Not many days after this, an ensigncy in the newly raised corps was given to him by its German colonel, to whom Fitz Arthur had previously and frankly stated, in con-

fidence, the man's history. As Stephen had shown some talent and activity as an officer when first in the army, it was hoped that military ardour might again kindle in him; and, to keep him from pecuniary embarrassments, Fitz Arthur pledged himself to supply the new officer with a hundred pounds annually (while his behaviour merited it): confident, that with such an addition to his pay in such a country, he might enjoy many comforts which other subalterns could not command.

Having actually seen Mr. Stephen off, and settled some business of Mrs. Letitia Branspeth's will, with a heart lightened of one heavy load, and his name stripped of its agreeable addition, a military title, Fitz Arthur turned his face homewards. If he went on his way, with some bitter regrets springing from the lingering love of a profession in which he had distinguished himself, and been conscious of blessedly interposing between brute violence and its victims, these were soothed by the prospect of gladdening

the last years of his bereaved father; of cherishing the unfolding perfections of his brother Hylton's character; and of conquering the rebellious nature of Thomas.

It must be owned, too, that Fitz Arthur was now and then entranced by certain visions, in which the image of Honor O'Hara was the first bright shape. Her heart, though not his, was not yet won by another: it might be won by him at last, perhaps; and in time his father's affairs would come round; and Honoria's wishes, like his own, had so little of the garish world in them, that with her, competence would be sufficient: — at any rate, he was now going to live always near her.

Fitz Arthur would not look further into the future: success in one virtuous endeavour to free himself from a sorrow, inspired him with hope on a dearer subject; and “he went, therefore, on his way rejoicing.”

CHAP. III.

ONLY three days previous to the one on which Delaval Fitz Arthur commenced his journey northwards, a most important event occurred to the family at the rectory. It befell them on their washing day, — a day hateful to all lovers of peace and pure air, who have the misfortune to dwell where good housewifery is exercised on a narrow principle of economy.

The house was in its meridian of dirt and disorder ; — a sudden hail-shower was falling ; — maids, footboy, mistress, were in the act of twitching half-dried linen off the lines of the desert garden ; (the crazy gate of which, was swinging to and fro, maugre Hetty Macready's repeated cry of "Bad luck to that gate!") pegs were giving way in all directions, sheets and shirts trailing in the mire with the fall ; when two gentlemen were

seen advancing up the avenue of towels and table-cloths that led in two regular lines from the fore-court gate to the mansion itself. As they cautiously made their way through an undergrowth of inferior Napery (modestly clothing the naked gooseberry bushes), Honoria got up from her seat to shut an open window, that she might hear her uncle's voice as he read aloud, while she darned his black stockings, unmixed with the jarring tones of Hetty and Mrs. Meredith. She saw the unseasonable visitors, and immediately knew one of them to be Mr. Mulcaster: the other, then, with head poetically inclined, must be his friend Mr. Gubbins.

What a day for her first sight of the poet! What a death blow to romance and impressions! — As if she had indeed received her death blow, Honoria fell back in the seat whence she had carelessly arisen. Her cheeks and lips were like ashes. She was not able to answer her uncle's question of "What was the matter?" Scarcely was she able to rise

according to common form, when the study door flew open ; and William Mulcaster, with a face of scarlet, said, in a hurried way, though giving personal precedence to his companion, — “ Mr. Meredith, I have taken the liberty to let myself in. — I could get nobody to hear. — I must announce, therefore, the Earl of Wearmouth.”

At that name, so honoured in the British Cabinet, and so awful on the continent of Europe, Honoria looked up : she certainly did not see her champion of the Shamrock (though an absurd fancy as certainly had lightened through her mind as Mr. Mulcaster spoke), but, *bonâ fide*, Lord Wearmouth, serious, stately, yet unalarming, replying with the utmost simplicity to the worthy Rector's embarrassed and repeated apologies for the servant not being in the way to announce His Lordship.

The business of Lord Wearmouth's visit was soon told. He came with a note from his mother to Miss O'Hara : he pre-

sumed the young lady present was Miss O'Hara, and he presented the note.

Honorina, fearing there was some mistake, hesitated to open the note, till His Lordship explained. The explanation was as flattering as unexpected. Lady Wearmouth had just received letters from her second son on the Indian station, informing her of a dangerous and tedious illness, which had attacked him in the Presidency of * *, where Mr. Meredith's brother was chief judge: it had occurred, while Captain Barrington was actually transacting some business with that gentleman at his bungalow, in the interior, and had confined him there above two months.

During this long period, Captain Barrington was nursed with such care, kindness, and liberality, by persons till then perfect strangers to him, that he was anxious to find out some stronger mode of testifying his gratitude, than the ordinary one of a piece of plate, or an expensive article of jewellery. Having discovered that his hospitable entertainer

had a brother and niece living close to Ravenshaw, nay, remembering the former well, as their respected pastor, he wrote to beg his mother would make an opportunity of personally showing Miss O'Hara every attention in her power; while he afforded his brother, the Earl, a mean of obliging the elder Mr. Meredith essentially.

Captain Barrington well knew what so simple a request to his mother was likely to produce in due time, if the young lady were found worthy of distinction. Her ladyship now wrote to apologize for not being able to call upon Mr. Meredith and Miss O'Hara in consequence of indisposition, and to beg (as she might venture such a freedom with a young lady,) that Miss O'Hara would do her the favour of dining at Ravenshaw on the following day. A carriage, it was said, would be sent to bring her to dinner, and would convey her back at night.

Lord Wearmouth, observing Honoria's heightened colour, as she repeated from the Countess's note the substance of this

flattering invitation, considerably observed, "We shall have no party, — only two friends in the house, and Mr. Mulcaster. So soon after your indisposition, my dear sir," he added, turning to Mr. Meredith, "it would be wrong to think of tempting you out; and Mrs. Meredith, of course, my mother must first call upon."

As her uncle bowed assent to both these remarks, Honoria saw herself left to the appalling necessity of going alone to Ravenshaw, to dine with a person she had never seen! — a Countess-dowager too! — How was she to conduct herself, so little as she knew of modes and manners out of Edenfell and Ballygarry! She fancied herself scared by long pauses in conversation at a solemn dinner, and longer intervals between the courses! How was she to know whether it would not be impertinence in her to attempt breaking such pauses? though to endure their trying awfulness, seemed a superhuman attainment. Her quick fancy conjured up all these horrors in a moment; but

recollecting that she would have her old acquaintance, Mr. Mulcaster, to fall back upon for support, she hastened to express in her prettiest manner, how much she considered herself honoured by Lady Wearmouth's notice; how very happy she was that a relation of hers had been so fortunate as to render a service to one of Lord Wearmouth's family; to beg His Lordship's pardon while she wrote a few lines to the dowager Countess; and, in short, to say and do all that was worthy the pupil of one, who had once mixed with the best society in Dublin.

Lord Wearmouth's visit was so short, that Honoria could only learn, in a whisper from Mr. Mulcaster, that his friend Gubbins would positively come for the races; and Mrs. Meredith had not time to strip off one gown and put on another that she might come in a proper figure, ere the gentlemen departed.

Mr. Mulcaster's whisper had fortified our heroine against her aunt's ill-humour; who no sooner heard the details of the visit than she was transported

out of herself with passion. Had she been invited to Ravenshaw, gladly would she have exchanged that distinction for an evening's tea and scandal with Mrs. Burton and Mrs. Chaplin; but to have Honor O'Hara asked there without her, not to be able to tell those village worthies that she might have gone had she chosen, but did not choose—this was an affront which flesh and blood could not brook. She raved in her wrath, refusing to believe that Lady Wearmouth was indisposed; and alternately railing at her husband for sitting tamely by to see his lady so slighted; and at Mr. John Meredith for being great and respected abroad.

Mrs. Meredith in her sane state, with meritorious instinct or calculation, shunned and disliked her superiors; she knew no other wish connected with those of exalted stations than getting something out of them; but in her present mood of jealous self-love, she attacked poor Honoria as though the latter had robbed her. Mr. Meredith's resigned

countenance was the best lesson to his niece, and she resumed her stocking-darning with a submissive meekness which ably copied his fashion of slowly turning over the leaves of a folio Bible.

Mrs. Meredith exhausted herself at last, and recollecting a best gown of many flounces, probably left in the garden, she abruptly quitted her husband's study, and so gave Honoria an opportunity of enquiring more particularly than she had ever before done, into the family character and family history of the residents at Ravenshaw.

All Mr. Meredith had to tell was interesting and prepossessing. The last Lord Wearmouth had been as much distinguished for fine taste and the graces, as the present one was known to be for the loftier powers of mind, and the sterner virtues of a patriot statesman. During the late lord's lifetime, Ravenshaw had been an earthly paradise of domestic bliss: its mistress was as captivating as excellent; and surrounded by eight lovely children had known no intermission of

happiness, until an early death bereaved her of her husband. To his memory she wedded herself, though without the ostentation of declaring it; silently retreating from the attentions of many a candidate for her favour as a young and charming widow, and decidedly refusing such as had the rashness to avow their wishes in the front of obvious discouragement.

In the course of fifteen years after her lord's death, Lady Wearmouth successively lost five children; three died of infantine disorders while yet only blossoms; the fourth was a sweet girl just opening into womanhood; the fifth was the fine youth who fell in the disastrous expedition to Holland in 1794.

There now remained to this devoted mother but the present earl, an only surviving daughter married to a nobleman of high character; and a brave young sailor on the Indian station, just raised to the rank of post-captain.

In speaking largely and warmly of this distinguished family, Mr. Meredith

owned that his own ill-assorted marriage had made him backward in replying to their cordial advances; hence he was not a frequent visitor at Ravenshaw, while they principally resided there; and as none of them had come to it since Mr. Charles Barrington's death, he felt that he had their acquaintance to recommence. But he assured his niece that she would find such natural-sweetness and simplicity of character, combined with higher qualities, in Lady Wearmouth, that so far from being uncomfortable in her presence, she would wish to live in it always; and would wonder how such graciousness and goodness could be supposed to form the original, whence Mrs. Shafto copied her alternate nauseous condescension, and cold contempt.

To Ravenshaw, on the following day, Honoria was conveyed in one of the Wearmouth carriages. Though her uncle had so fluently detailed the solid worth, and attractive graces of the dowager Countess, she yet went with unreasonable apprehension, grounded upon the

prejudiced idea that no one could be so admired by Mrs. Shafto as to become her model, unless they were elegantly odious. She forgot that Mrs. Shafto imitated what other people admired.

How quickly was this prejudiced notion changed at Ravenshaw! She was received by Lady Wearmouth alone, dressed like a woman of rank, yet neither ostentatiously nor negligently. The first tones of a voice naturally sweet and winning, the first regard of an eye which more than one sorrow had softened into dove-like gentleness, dispersed Honoria's prejudices. She returned the Countess's amiable welcome, by a blush and a beam from her brighter eye, which rendered the indistinctness of her fluttered words of no consequence.

The Countess gracefully entered at once upon the motives which prompted her to seek so earnestly the acquaintance of Miss O'Hara, and to hope for greater intimacy with their worthy rector. She spoke with evident, yet restrained tenderness of her absent son's dangerous illness,

of his many excellencies, his filial devotion to her, his country's expectations from him, and her own maternal feelings in consequence. She touched for a moment upon her last loss, as if only to give occasion for dwelling longer upon her obligations to those who, under Heaven, had preserved to her this other beloved child.

Honor's brief answers, and far more expressive looks, evidently pleased Lady Wearmouth ; for after having read her the letter from Captain Barrington, which detailed his obligations to Mr. John Meredith, and included some interesting particulars of that gentleman's infant family, she proceeded to narrate little anecdotes of her sailor's childhood, which showed how fondly a mother's heart treasures up what to others might seem trifles, but which the after life of the man proves to have been faithful heralds of future character : thence she digressed into partial accounts of her other children ; showing herself nobly regardless of ordinary forms and customs, when only

laudable feelings could be excited by throwing them aside.

Honor, contrasting all this with Mrs. Shafto's notion of maternal fondness, and high breeding, almost smiled at the gross blunder thus committed.

Lady Wearmouth's egotism, as she herself called it somewhat unjustly, had a motive under it, which however Honor did not discover at the time ; but which after observation of that gracious character made her fully aware of — it was the desire of inducing her young visitor by this apparent confidence, to speak a little of herself, and her own concerns.

Lady Wearmouth sincerely wished to be of real service to the niece of Mr. John Meredith ; and to do that, she knew that she must find out, without offensively questioning her as if by virtue of superior rank, what were the wants in her present situation, and what her own habits and inclinations.

It was not what is called *the art* of unlocking characters, which in three quarters of an hour before dinner gave

Lady Wearmouth a pretty clear view of Honor O'Hara's peculiarities of education and condition; it was the irresistible effect of genuine kindness, operating upon a young and ingenuous heart. Those three quarters of an hour were invaluable to Honoria, for they set her completely at her ease, upon one or two important points; and substituted the delightful hope of pleasing an admirable person, for the fear of sinning against the punctilious creed of a woman of excessive, nay frivolous refinement.

The dinner to which the ladies were summoned at six o'clock, (a very late hour at that period,) was perhaps like a cabinet dinner — but certainly not in the least like one at the Mansion House; yet it was sufficiently and elegantly furnished.

Lady Wearmouth denounced neither the wines, nor the made dishes at table, though she never ate of the latter; and smilingly pitied herself for being condemned by a hectic tendency to drink only water. She invited her guests to

the indulgence of their individual tastes, by taking it for granted that nothing could appear at a good table, which it was indecorous to eat or to drink ; and once making that opinion quite evident she suffered things to go their course without notice.

The party consisted only of Lord Wearmouth, a Mr. Herbert, a Mr. Pemberton, the Countess, and our heroine. Mr. Mulcaster had sent an excuse. The gentlemen were all members of administration ; and those who could guess at such secrets, divined their reasons for seeking the distant retirement of Ravenshaw, just before a great political interest was about to be agitated by the privy council.

Lord Wearmouth looked what he was, an able statesman : there was no anxiety, but deep and provident thoughtfulness in his aspect ; it declared him one conscious of high responsibilities, and of capacities to meet them — one that fixing his eye upon a single great and right point, would go straight up to it, regardless alike of party clamour, or of private weakness.

Lord Wearmouth was habitually taciturn ; but his grave look expanded into one of sudden amiableness whenever the name of his wife and boys were mentioned.

Mr. Herbert sat, and said nothing ; looked gruff, and ate laboriously.

Mr. Pemberton talked fluently, and foolishly, Honoria thought ; but he looked so acute, that she suspected what was true, his thorough contempt for the intellects of women. Though turned of fifty, Mr. Pemberton addressed himself to her with an air of obvious gallantry ; yet his remarks never exceeded in pretence to consequence anything beyond a fashion or a song, a yeomanry corps or an expected drawing-room : he did not, therefore, gain much upon her attention.

During dinner the rattle of four wheels and four horses, the ringing of gate bells and house bells, and a perfect rush of servants into the hall, announced some arrival.

Lady Wearmouth was surprised. She knew it could not be Lord Francis Fitz James, as he was to be that very day cele-

brating his father's birthday in London. Could it be her son Horace? His letter had hinted at the chance of his bringing home some official person from India. "A mother's fancies are foolish, I know!" she added, after hastily expressing this idea, as she met the smiling dissent of her eldest son's eye, — and reseating herself, she waited quietly, though with a raised complexion, for information from without.

Honor's silly heart had throbbed at the name of Lord Francis Fitz James, associated as it was with that of his friend the knight of the shamrock, and the lyre; but it beat with more honouring emotion when thus called to sympathize with an affectionate mother. The entrance and message of a servant quickly ended all heart-throbs.

The message came from Lady Haverford, a young widow, the niece of Lady Wearmouth. "She was on her way to Scotland, when hearing of her aunt and cousin being at Ravenshaw, she had come, self-invited, to go to the officers' races with

them. Lady Haverford had dined on the road, therefore would change her dress, and meet her aunt in the drawing-room."

Lady Wearmouth welcomed this message with a smothered sigh, and a gracious smile ; and soon after the dessert appeared, preceded Honoria to the place of rendezvous.

A remarkably pretty woman, dressed with an air of graceful negligence, started up from a cushion on which she was sitting, fondling an Italian greyhound, and throwing back a profusion of curling, though cropt hair, flung her arms round the neck of Lady Wearmouth, exclaiming, "Dearest aunty ! sweetest aunty ! my *béauteous* aunty !" kissing her really handsome aunt between each energetic exclamation. "I know I have behaved like ten dozen of monsters to you,—but it is so impossible to write letters when one is living with loads of people !—and I've had all the affairs of the dear Stafford girls upon my hands ; Caroline's match is off, and Lizzy's will never

come on. I have worked like a galley slave for them, but all to no purpose. — Then I have had the subscription ball for that foolish Madame Grenier to manage, people tore me to pieces for tickets ! and I have been plaguing the very heart of the Horse Guards out, for a commission for Mrs. Norton's son or nephew ; and getting people to go to somebody's benefit at Drury Lane : I forget the man's name, but he vowed he was in deep distress. In short, I am fairly worn out ; and am come here before I get into the whirl of Scotland, and its dear, delightful people, to forget all the world except my dearest aunty, and my dear awful cousin Wearmouth."

Lady Wearmouth kept smiling while this rapid address was uttering : when it was done, she said tenderly, "ever going the same round, my dear Gertrude, squandering your best powers and valuable time upon every one bold enough to ask for them at first sight ; — leaving us who love you, and others whom you might essentially benefit, to sigh in vain

after your sweet society and active kindness." She then presented Miss O'Hara, introducing her as the niece of the Mr. Meredith, to whom her cousin Horace owed so much gratitude.

Lady Haverford's exclamation at this unexpected rencontre was rapturous; she insisted upon embracing Honoria, telling her aunt with graceful good humour, that she *would* be enchanted with a niece of that darling Mr. Meredith, even though at the risk of being lectured for hasty feelings. She then said so much of her cousin Horace, and the obligation conferred on his whole family by the attention paid him during his illness, that Honoria secretly settled the youthful widow, as one attached to the gallant sailor by a tenderer tie than blood relationship. Although there certainly was something artificial in Lady Haverford's complexion, her countenance was captivating; her eyes were either fine, or finely taught, for they had the greatest variety of expression even while trifles were speaking; and the caressing gaiety of

her manner was what Honoria had never before seen.

None, save a woman of high rank, can indulge in such a manner, which has all the unrestraint of childhood ; yet, from a woman of high rank, it ever takes us by an agreeable surprise. Again, Honoria could not forbear thinking how egregiously Mrs. Shafto was mistaken in supposing insipidity and insolence the marks of a superior station. Lady Haverford was all frankness and familiarity.

The moment Lady Haverford discovered by questioning her, that Honoria loved music and every object of taste, she sang and played to her numberless original airs gathered from persons of musical genius, instead of repeating those popular opera songs, which we so often hear till even their beauty becomes loathsome. She sketched with a pencil little illustrations of her own vivid descriptions of persons and places abroad ; retailed the amusing gossip of all the fashionable houses she had been staying at ; made her aunt laugh in spite of overcharged

ridicule in her descriptions ; and occasionally broke in upon her own spirits, by little pathetic parentheses, about the untoward loves of different female friends.

Every thing she said, displayed a heart of luxuriant, unpruned good-nature ; a disposition, not merely disinclined to look on the bad parts of human character, but ready to shut its own eyes, when to see would be to disturb its happy unconsciousness of a defect. Honoria was quite captivated.

As Lady Wearmouth rang for coffee at the appearance of the gentlemen, she looked smilingly at her niece, who was flying back to Honoria's side, after an animated meeting with her ministerial cousin, "I see," she said, "it is quite in vain, Gertrude, to dispute your possession of Miss O'Hara for this evening at least, so I shall have less scruple in making up my son's whist party. Miss O'Hara, I give you over to my niece — but I warn you to be upon your guard ; she is — at least so my Horace says — mightily given to pick people's pockets of their hearts :

—and she is so careless of her many pieces of plunder afterwards, much as she values them — that I won't say what becomes of them at last."

"You dear, scandalous person!" exclaimed Lady Haverford, with invincible good-humour. "Well, if Miss O'Hara is not afraid of me after this, she and I will waft ourselves into the conservatory. Good bye, sweet aunty! darling aunty!" — kissing her own pretty hand with a little affectation, yet so engagingly, that Honoria did not see it was somewhat tainted with the intention of being engaging. To the conservatory they went, through the open glass-doors which led into it.

The ascending stages of this agreeable appendage to a ground-floor sitting-room, were crowded with beautifully arranged plants, breathing warmth and fragrance; it looked out upon a glade of the park, where a herd of deer were seen lying in the moonlight, under the shade of some venerable oaks; glimpses of the river Eden were caught through openings of

more distant masses of wood, gliding like melted silver in the same sweet moonshine. Honoria's picturesque-loving eye involuntarily fixed upon the scene out of doors.

Lady Haverford, meanwhile, was gaily and unsparingly stripping the choice exotics of their brightest flowers, to make a nosegay for her unobservant companion, till its enormous size made her laugh at herself; and praying Honoria to take at least half the flowers out of her hand, or she should drop them all, she noticed the direction of her eye.

"Don't I know what you would like at this moment?" she asked, with flattering quickness. "Come — if you are not afraid of the evening air such an almost-summer night, I am not; shall we venture? — there! — there! — now you are cold-proof." And as she spoke, Lady Haverford took a silk scarf from her own shoulders, and twisting it round the head and throat of Honoria, declared she looked like a head of Domenichino's: then hurried her into the park.

It was in vain that Honoria, quite fascinated by this attention, and the manner of doing it, besought her to think of herself: Lady Haverford declared she made a practice of inuring herself to every possible fancy of every creature on earth; so she never took cold, and never was over-heated, and never tired, and never hungry, or thirsty, or sleepy, except when it was quite convenient to other people. How was it possible not to be captivated by such an unselfed character, extravagant though it might be!

As they advanced on their calm path, Lady Haverford often stopped to look round and admire. "What a night! — what a divine moon! — those still trees, — those fine shadows! — that lovely little river! how beyond comparison was the enjoyment of such a scene, and with such a companion, before all the fuss of dressing and playing the pleasant to a set of people we care nothing for!"

Lady Haverford's observations met with the heartiest concurrence from Ho-

norcia ; and having thus established their congeniality on these minor points, her charming ladyship proceeded to go deeper into her companion's heart, by enlarging on the characters and histories of her aunt and cousin. In doing this, she had yet greater means of fascinating her hearer :— for the details of Lady Wearmouth's domestic losses ; anecdotes of the son and daughter, torn from life in its earliest spring ; descriptions of the present Earl's simple and amiable mode of living in the bosom of his family when breathing after the arduous duties of his high office ; animated portraits of Captain Barrington and of his sister, Lady Sarum, at once the most enchanting of fine ladies, and the fondest of wives ; — all these circumstances called forth Lady Haverford's warmest powers of description. If the persons described might not merit such rapturous praise as she bestowed, in its fullest extent, at least it proved the most loving and loveable nature in their eulogist ; and Honoria could not prevent her own enthusiasm

from bursting from her lips with the remark.

Lady Haverford was gratified to absolute rapture. All at once she exclaimed, "That crystal moon! O for Lord Francis Fitz James! — is he not quite worthy of being with us just now?"

Honorio confessed her non-acquaintance with a person of whom she had heard only incidentally. Lady Haverford was all amazement.

"Not know Lord Francis Fitz James! was that possible! the only creature positively *the fashion*! the very spoilt child of every living thing! — he, that was never to be got to go anywhere, or to do anything he did not choose; — therefore the most delightfully provoking creature possible! — the person always going his own way! caring neither for coaxing nor flattering! — he that was like nothing on earth but a Grecian statue! he that spoke poetry! — breathed music! — knew more of history and science than all the professors at the two Universities! — the most wayward —

most careless — most impassioned — most listless — most romantic — most fashioned — most winning — most disdainful — in short, the most contradictory, yet all-conquering being ever created.”

Lady Haverford was quite out of breath with her own rapid thoughts, as well as utterance. Honoria's pulses were beating tumultuously : — this description was so like Mr. Mulcaster's account of his friend Mr. Gubbins — and there was obviously some mystery about that gentleman's visit to Arthur's Court ; she remembered the sculptured brow of her champion ; and, with a fluttering voice, she endeavoured to say how much she wished to see so extraordinary a mixture of faults and graces.

The animated widow went on to say that her friend Caroline Stafford had been dying for him all the season before the present, and what she had suffered ! — but he had never given her the slightest hope ! — he was so strangely cold to most young ladies ! — yet now and then he seemed suddenly struck with a new

face, and would devote himself to it for a whole evening: — then something would disenchant him, for he was fastidious to a misery — and he would become as sad, or scornful, or indifferent as before.

“Then vanity, at least, is not amongst the sins of your paragon!” Honoria, half-questioned, almost ashamed of the interest she felt. Lady Haverford entirely acquitted her hero of it. She maintained, however, that he was too romantic, that he expected more than he would ever find; and she prophesied, that if ever he married, it would be some one quite out of his own set; for he made no secret of his aversion to what he called the world, though he amused himself with it: — and, as he scorned money, he would most likely be bringing some lovely creature out of a cottage, or some interesting savage from North America.

Honoria ventured to suggest, that in neither of these personages could a man of refined taste expect to find the companion he sought.

Lady Haverford owned she was right, — excusing her silly assertion, by the fact, “that his eccentric lordship was once actually on the point of marriage with a Miss Clarke, whom not a creature had ever heard of, and whom he got acquainted with at a water-drinking place, when he was attending an only and beloved sister, who afterwards died there. After all, the lady used him shamefully ill; — and ever since then, what with the disappointment, — what with his excessive grief for the loss of his sister, — Lord Francis had been more fitful and capricious, and interesting, and indifferent to what people thought of him, than ever. Every creature who read his poems must see what a strange, enthusiastic, dejected being he was!”

“His poems!”

“I mean his ‘Feelings and Fancies.’”

Honorina echoed the last words almost joyfully; but Lady Haverford, not staying to enquire why she seemed so pleased, ran on to say, “although he put that ridiculous name to them, we all knew

whose they were. I am so amazed you did not know Lord Francis wrote! That people here, — such nameless vulgarians as my Lady Sykes, and Mrs. Shafto, should be quite out of the secret, is not at all odd — but that you! — it is marvellous.”

While her gay companion continued discussing this popular volume, (popular, because printed mysteriously, and written by an admired young man of rank,) Honoria stood puzzling out the meaning of Lady Haverford's extravagant compliment to her, at the expence of the *great* lady of Shafto Place! — yet Honoria could not guess the magnitude of such a compliment.

Secluded as she had lived, she knew not that beyond that narrow circle of rank and splendour, on which the outward world ignorantly gaze, there is yet a smaller and more worshipped one, where a motley set dwell apart, proscribing every one without. Why, and how, these personages are adopted into this set, is a mystery only equalled by the Freemason's

secret ; for none of its number has ever been heard to say what qualification is required in an aspirant.

It is nor youth, nor age, nor beauty, nor ugliness, nor wit, nor dulness, nor birth, nor obscurity, nor principle, nor immorality, nor pretensions of any kind, which may obtain a place in this sacred circle. The person brought into the society, is taken as the legions of the Lower Empire chose their emperor, — for nothing — sometimes *out of* nothing. We, uninitiated, who do but peep through chinks in their wall of separation from us, may only guess at the laws and customs of these unknown people : so, whether they are regularly swayed by an hereditary chief, or only for seasons by an usurper ; whether the whole body be like the mamelukes, a sort of nursery for future Beys, — or whether it be merely a politely-uproarious assembly of exquisite pretenders, all equally rule-worthy, and rule-loving, is left for better-informed heads than mine, to puzzle out and set forth ; — at all events it com-

pletely baffled Honoria's; and with a noble sincerity, which actually preserved her in the place Lady Haverford's instant prepossession had bestowed on her, she asked information, and obtained it.

This was followed up by fresh raptures about Lord Francis, his acting, his singing — “the creature who could not get Lord Francis to sing one of his own impromptu melodies to them, might as well dig their grave at once!” Honoria could not forbear taxing the fair eulogist with a dangerous degree of interest in her subject.

Lady Haverford refuted the charge with every sign of sincerity. — “No — she had known Lord Francis first, when her lord was alive; and she was familiar with all that took others by surprise: — and she had no time to fall in love since Lord Haverford's death, whom by the by, she had been given to at sixteen — he was fifty, but he was the kindest, best-bred person, the most amiable husband! — Since then she had been monopolised by so many friends and re-

latives, that she never dreamed of marrying again. She really thought, if Lord Francis came to Ravenshaw, and saw Miss O'Hara, *his hour would come!* it should be so; Miss O'Hara should go with them to the races, and it *must* be!"

Honorina, all in a glow of confusion, pleasure, and some feeling of proud self-denial, hastily assured Lady Haverford that she was engaged to accompany the Dean of ——'s family; — and, that if she were not, she would rather forego the honour and happiness of being in Lady Haverford's company, than appearing to swell the train of any admired and arrogant person of the other sex."

"I knew it!" exclaimed the good-humoured Lady Haverford; "this is so exactly what Lord Francis would be enchanted with! You shall go your own way as well as he; though it drives me to despair not to have you with me at those races. But you shall *not* run away from me when we meet on the ground, or in the stand, or wherever these officers mean us to be. Remember, I bespeak

you all to me and my party, whoever they may be."

Honoria blushed and laughed evasively. Her little head was full of wild, fluttering thoughts: images bright and rare were hovering through it, like birds among sun-clouds; all too dazzling for the sight to fix on. This extraordinary Lord Francis seemed so extraordinarily brought before her imagination by every one! From the different sketches given her of his character, it seemed exactly the sort of character to charm her wild taste, and at the same time satisfy her better-judging heart. Such noble contempt of ordinary admiration, of frivolous society, of mere rank and riches! Such deep tenderness for a sister! So interesting, too, from having loved romantically, and been cruelly rejected or deserted! He was the bard she had been admiring, — he was the champion of her dear country, at Arthur's Court! and he was coming to Ravenshaw; where, by a most singular concurrence of unexpected events, she was

now courted to visit in the most gratifying terms !

Honorina knew she was handsome, — many conquests made her suspect she could charm. Lord Francis was said to denounce taking a wife from his own set ; — if then — no — she must not fancy such an improbability ! — he was the second son of a marquess ; and if the son might wish, the father ought not to consent to such an unequal union.

Honorina had just sense enough left, after Lady Haverford's dazzling rhapsodies, to quell her own thronging visions ; and clearing her troubled brow with a smile, she proposed running back to the house. Lady Haverford, accepting the phrase literally, started off with the swiftness of an Atalanta ; and Honorina, thus obliged to pursue her, both of them arrived out of breath, all bloom and laughter, at the entrance to the conservatory.

Here Honorina paused a moment to compose her looks, with respectful consideration of those she was entering to ;

but her privileged companion went joyously on. "We have taken such a delightful walk!" she exclaimed in her usual animated tone.

"You have taken cold," said Mr. Herbert, with a short snappish air, yet not looking up from his cards. "I trust Miss O'Hara has not done more than she ought to do," half-questioned Lady Wearmouth, yet too gently to suggest an idea of reproof.

Honor's prompt and grateful reply satisfied her. "As for you, Gertrude," Her Ladyship continued, "you have so entirely robbed us of Miss O'Hara, in spite of herself, that I must put in a claim for a quiet day of her society, after these races, when you are gone. Meanwhile, the oftener she will come to Ravenshaw, and give us a *chance* of improving our acquaintance with her, the more agreeable will it be to my son and myself."

Honor's speaking colour and curtsy acknowledged this pleasing solicitude for her society.

Lord Wearmouth now looked off his cards — “If we had not unluckily been deserted by Mr. Mulcaster,” he said, with momentary playfulness, “a flirtation might have proved a tolerable diversion in our favour; and Miss O'Hara might have escaped a fit of the toothache.”

“Mr. Mulcaster!” repeated Lady Haverford, — “that charming, entertaining, original creature! those ten days I spent with him at Sarum! we laughed through every one of them like two children! was he coming? and he has not come!”

“There lies his note,” resumed His Lordship, pointing to one on a work-table; “see if you can make out his apology, for neither I nor my mother could.”

Lady Haverford caught up the note, and by the aid of Honoria's better acquaintance with the young man's hand, deciphered these lines: —

“Mr. William Mulcaster entreats Lord Wearmouth's pardon for the necessity he is under of relinquishing the

honour of dining at Ravenshaw to-day ; he trusts that a most intolerable headache may be offered as an apology."

The difficulty in deciphering, lay in the word *head-ache*. Lady Haverford laughingly asserted the phrase was *heart-ache* ; and so it indeed appeared to have been originally written ; but some little rubbing and blotting had altered the letters of *heart*, into those of *head*, and it was from this smearing, that Lord and Lady Wearmouth had been puzzled.

Some pretty *badinage* about hearts and heads, passed between Lady Haverford and Mr. Pemberton, in defiance of Lord Wearmouth's grave calls for attention to their game, and the repeated pshaw's ! of Mr. Herbert. The latter in truth uttered that testy monosyllable so often and so quickly, that Lady Haverford fancying he sneezed, good-naturedly interrupted herself to bid God bless him.

No one could resist the comic effect of such a mistake ; and all laughed therefore, except Honoria. She stood uncon-

sciously fixed in serious thought with the note open in her hand. She had forgotten Lord Francis Fitz James, nay, Lady Haverford herself, and with true friendly anxiety was revolving the probabilities of something having gone wrong in the affair of Major Stanhope and Jane.

If a refusal had arrived from Lord Culverdon, or had been returned by the Dean, no wonder the kind brother's heart and head ached.

Her silence and changed countenance were eloquent to Lady Haverford's quick eye; with genuine warm-heartedness, though making quite a wrong guess at the primary object of Honoria's evident uneasiness, she asked her if she would accompany her in a visit to St. Cuthberts the next day? — adding, that as she had never been at Ravenshaw since she first married, she had not seen the younger ones since they were grown up, and she was dying to see if they were as lovely as their eldest sister, and half as agreeable as their brother. And she knew they

were all such favourites with her aunt, that she was sure her cousin would let them have his curricie and trust her to drive it.

Lord Wearmouth nodded assent; Honoria eagerly accepted the timely proposal; nothing further was required than a fine day: Mr. Herbert shortly decided it would rain cats and dogs: Lady Haverford was gaily indifferent to any fall, short of water. She arranged a whole plan of operations. Miss O'Hara would be so good as to come first to her in Lady Wearmouth's coach, which would be returning at eleven o'clock the next morning from conveying the gentlemen present to a public meeting. Then they would get off by twelve; and if they found every body in their nightcaps at such an hour, so much the more amusing. Lady Haverford would call at Monksden on the way; then leave Miss O'Hara at St. Cuthberts without getting out herself; then proceed to Hexham Hall, and return to join the dear delightful set at Dean Mulcaster's. It would be quite easy to

do all this before dinner, as Hexham was not above three miles from St. Cuthberts.

Mr. Herbert threw in his usual damper, "It is six ;" but who ever regarded Mr. Herbert out of his office ! In despite, therefore, of threatened rain, and a longer road, the appointment was made ; and Lady Wearmouth followed up some trifling message to one of the Misses Mulcaster, with commendations of each, and expressions of warm esteem for their father, which sincerely gratified the partial feelings of Honoria.

Soon after this important matter was settled, the carriage was announced as ready to convey Miss O'Hara home, and having received a pressure of the hand so fond and flattering from Lady Haverford, that it might have stood for an embrace, our heroine was led out by the Earl himself.

As she hurried through the hall she could not help uttering some admiring words about his fascinating relation. "Yes ; she is a most popular person," was all that her frank praise extracted :

she smiled at the cautious covering of a statesman's heart ; then sighed to think such covering necessary. Lady Haverford had charmed her so entirely, that she wondered how any one could feel calmly towards her. Lady Haverford appeared so wholly unspoilt by the dissipated world ; she displayed such tact in divining secret feelings and wishes ! none but a heart of genuine sensibility could have such tact ! Then such vivid affections ! such ardent admiration of other persons ! not a tincture of envy or superciliousness in her lively representations ! such active wide-spreading benevolence too, indiscriminate as it might be ! and to crown all, such accomplishments ! In truth Lady Haverford was unquestionably far superior to Jane Mulcaster in charm of manner and highly developed talents ; and if her heart were proved to equal that warm and generous one, must it not follow that Honoria would eventually prefer her new acquaintance to her earlier friend ? A gush of kindly feelings and grateful remembrances, and new-roused sympa-

thies, seemed to answer no, in the breast of the self-questioner; and Honoria, ashamed of having made the preference a question, restored every thought and every wish to her first favourite companion.

CHAP. IV.

THE next morning, our heroine's little history of her *grand visit*, as Mrs. Meredith offensively persisted in calling the quiet dinner at Ravenshaw, was detailed to her uncle's perfect satisfaction, and his wife's bitter ridicule. Mrs. Meredith could not, however, scoff at the noble possessors of Ravenshaw; but she indemnified herself, by many coarse strokes at Honoria's conceited expectations, and extravagant squandering of her paltry income in consequence; coupling these with liberal predictions of utter disappointment.

Honoria was hardily indifferent to her aunt's tongue, when it was only exercised in private: she now heard its discordant alternations without betraying any disturbance, while busying herself in little attentions to her uncle, and placing within

his reach all the books and papers, which he might want while she was out with Lady Haverford.

Mrs. Meredith, irritated at her niece's proposed absence for a whole forenoon, nay afternoon, when she had intended setting her to see to the bottling of the green gooseberries, actually lashed herself into a fury; so that her husband's pathetic appeals, and assurances that his niece could not with propriety refuse to accompany Lady Haverford to visit their mutual friends, were of no avail.

In the midst of this domestic din the Wearmouth carriage was announced, and Honoria escaped.

When arrived at Ravenshaw, our heroine was intercepted by the gay Viscountess's French maid, who with all the grace of a French woman, announced that her lady was not yet up, but that she entreated Miss O'Hara would do her the favour of coming to her in her room. To Lady Haverford's sleeping-room, therefore, Honoria went.

Wherever Lady Haverford transported

herself, thither were transported also multitudes of *comforts*, as this superfine attendant called luxurious and modish trifles. Pillows of the finest cambric, flounced, and lined with pink ; a coverlid of eider-down, quilted between satin of the same cheek-tinging colour, to do away with the necessity of blankets ; a portable bath ; essences and pastes, and combs and brushes without end ; and a dressing service of crystal and gold, strewed over a toilet table, where lay in yet greater number and confusion, rings, armlets, necklaces, brooches ; in short, every article of jewellery invented to amuse grown children. Of all these things, the appropriate cases and stands seemed only brought to add to the disorder ; not to be used in diminishing it.

Every chair, every table, every sofa had something occupying it. Books on one, music and a harp-lyre on another ; handboxes on a third ; gowns and shoes on a fourth ; piles of artificial flowers on a fifth ; a tea-tray with everything sliding off it, on a sixth ; writing materials here,

open letters there ; every species in short of elegant litter and disorder.

Honorina stood in the midst of it, in comic distress, suddenly imprisoned by the impetuous recoil of sundry doors of wardrobes and closets, opened by one of the officiating priestesses of the sanctum. Lady Haverford herself was thrown back on her pillow, suffocating with mirth, after having half-started out of bed, to welcome her visitor.

Ma'mselle meanwhile won her gliding way through the chaos, with perfect ease of look and motion, issuing orders to her lady's English maid, to find a seat for Miss O'Hara.

Lady Haverford patted the bed, as she would have done in invitation to her dog Zephyr ; and Honorina instantly accepting the hint, sprung to the place thus offered.

"This is so dear of you," exclaimed her animated new friend. Honorina's brightly-thanking eyes, as they lifted up their deep dark shades to meet those of Lady Haverford, saw there the same witchery of

heart, and hilarity, and happy temper, which had fascinated her the night before. Lady Haverford exclaimed at her good looks. But you are so handsome! — you must know you are so *very* handsome! that it's quite useless not to cry out about it. Even gruff Mr. Herbert could not find a word to stop my ravings, after you went last night, except, — “She's too short!”

Honor's laugh at Her Ladyship's imitation of Mr. Herbert's snappish tone, helped to cover her confusion at being thus admired to her own face; and Lady Haverford's lively spirits immediately setting off in their wildest career, left her leisure to survey every surrounding object in the room.

Not one of the appendages to a fine lady's chamber escaped our heroine's notice; but the lady herself chiefly occupied her.

A most becoming, yet dishevelled night-dress, (far remote, however, from being a comfortable one,) set off the prettiness of Lady Haverford's features, and the play

of her countenance. Every thing she wore was elaborately worked, and richly laced: but frills and collars were unfastened, and one arm, from which the unbuttoned long sleeve was perpetually falling open; still retained the bracelets of the preceding evening. A night-cap of Mechlin, and pink riband, produced an effect quite unsuitable to the quiet period of sleep, as it just covered the back of the wearer's head, leaving half the curls of the unbandaged hair to play about the face, and torment, or heighten the beauty of the eyes.

Lady Haverford's pretty countenance and pliant form looked so charming in this negligent costume; and the vivacity of her actions, as she now rose from her pillow, now threw herself back on it, afforded so plausible an excuse for the untidy state of her bed, that Honoria would not allow herself to see or to feel that Lady Haverford in her chamber was not so agreeable to her, as Lady Haverford in a drawing-room. Yet so it was: and when Her Ladyship rose and went

through the customary duties of ablution and dressing, (which indeed she did with the nicest scrupulosity, and most perfect disregard of beholders, talking and laughing all the time like a child in a nursery,) Honoria's feelings of surprise and repugnance returned: nay, returned so strongly, that she had to remind herself of the force of habit, and the unavoidableness of such habits amongst persons never accustomed from infancy to do anything for themselves, ere she could quite forgive Lady Haverford for what seemed to her, a sin against womanly delicacy.

The responsibility of Lady Haverford's appearance, being solely intrusted to the foreign maid, and the more mechanical operations of dressing falling to the share of the English one, Honoria was not a little amused by the novel scene; and not a little amazed by the pretty Viscountess's seeming indifference to her looks after all. She seemed literally to let the able *artiste* dress her at will, out of pure easiness of temper; and though never did prime minister more fully honour

the trust of his king than ma'mselle did her lady's, still to Honoria, who set a great value upon her own inimitable taste, who would not have endured the most fashionable style of dress, had it not been exactly adapted to, or ably modified to suit her own style of person — to her, the carelessness with which Lady Haverford issued from her room, without even a glance at the glass, was absolutely magnanimous.

There was no time for seeking the dowager countess, ere they left Ravenshaw; so into the curricule they got, and were instantly whirled off by two beautiful greys.

During their drive, Lady Haverford was most delightful, entertaining, amiable. She talked of every living person, whose names were either to be found in the peerage, or on the single page of that mysterious roll, *The Fashion*.

To Honoria, who gaily avowed herself savagely ignorant, this was like reading an amusing succession of little novels; for though nearly all the heroes and he-

roides of Lady Haverford's anecdotes were unknown to her, they were still human beings; and Lady Haverford sketched their characters, and gave their biography with felicitous talent: it was not their biographer's fault that they were all persons of rank or station; she knew no other. There was nothing, therefore, of parade and pretension in her repetition of their sounding names.

The longer her gay companion talked of *her* world, the more was Honoria struck by the total ignorance of such life in its interior arrangements, which was displayed by Mrs. Shafto's mode of proceeding: long before they had completed their drive, her good sense had solved the problem in this way; — that nothing being so intolerable as to see oneself badly imitated, persons of real fashion keep all pretenders to such distinction at too great a distance for the latter to discern, what are the distinctive characteristics of high breeding.

Only in two circumstances during their drive, was Honoria disappointed: Lady

Haverford merely rested on Lord Francis Fitz James's name for an instant, skimming away to another young man's history; and they did not reach St. Cuthberts till an hour after the time Honoria's anxiety had calculated upon.

The last disappointment was in consequence of their being encountered on the road, by equestrians of Lady Haverford's acquaintance—dropt, as she styled it, from the skies upon distant Northumberland. Minutes flew unheeded, while questioning where they were staying; where going; what had been the end of such and such an affair known to them and herself—for Lady Haverford seemed interested and occupied for every body. Then she had to stop at Monksden, and just shake hands for a moment with Lady Henderson, who, as Emily Arundel, had been her friend and neighbour at Haverford:—at Monksden she staid half an hour, for she had found *mobs* there. Honoria smiled sincere forgiveness, as Lady Haverford thus entreated pardon. She saw that wherever the cap-

tivating Viscountess went, she left friends and worshippers behind : a tax must be paid for such popularity, — her time, and her notice at least.

To St. Cuthberts, however, they got at last. Honoria alighted : Lady Haverford went on.

The cause of Mr. Mulcaster's head and heart ache was soon explained to Honoria's great relief. Lady Catherine Eustace was going to be married. After giving him all the encouragement possible : — such as dancing with him at every ball ; sitting apart with him whenever they met in society ; employing him on all her commissions ; praising his horses ; patting his dogs ; wearing his favourite colour ; giving him flowers ; taking all the rides he recommended, though sure to encounter him in the course of them ; laughing and refusing to be serious when he seriously protested he was dying for her ; in short, letting him go on, making himself be set down for her absolute slave (he conscious, meanwhile, that *she* had first angled for *him*) ; — after all

this, she had accepted the hand of Lord Brinkbourn, offered for him, by his father to hers; and her mother had in a very civil note, as if in the common course of things, done the family at St. Cuthberts the honour of asking their congratulations upon her daughter's happy prospects.

Jane Mulcaster repeated all these heinous offences in a flame of sisterly resentment. Her dear, darling William, to be so duped! — such a heartless little coquette! — such worthless mercenariness! — she could not but love William, — she could not help loving such a dear creature so devoted to her! — how shameful, then, to accept another man! as it could only be from Lord Brinkbourn's title, such secret preference made her doubly iniquitous. But no, Jane decided the next instant that Lady Catherine could not love William, or she would have rejoiced in the opportunity of refusing a marchioness's coronet for his sake: — well! — that blindness to William's merits — that ingratitude for all his devotion was worse than all! Jane

might have pardoned her, had she been in the least sensible of what she was giving up !

In short, poor Jane said all sorts of inconsistent things, as every body does when they are mortified and irritated : but every word came from a true sister's heart, judging a brother's fanciful love, by her better-founded and more seriously pursued one ; and bleeding at every vein, over his imagined sufferings.

Torrents of tears burst from her eyes as she described her brother's fury of surprise and grief when reading Lady Hexham's official despatch. With difficulty had she got him to pen those few scrawling lines to Lord Wearmouth, which were no sooner done than he had locked himself into his own room, where he now remained deaf to every petition for admittance. Ere he had thus immured himself, he had besought Jane in pity to his outraged feelings to keep his father from coming to lecture, or to laugh at him. And had declared that but for *her* sake, he would have forsworn

the very sight of a woman for the whole of his coming life.

“And what has the Dean said about it?” asked Honoria, eased of her apprehensions for Jane, but compassionating the present victim.

“O, papa’s speech has frightened me to death!” returned Jane, turning quite pale with remembered alarm. “He bade me go and tell my brother with his love, that he could only allow him just as many days’ solitude, as he might find requisite for writing an elegy after the fashion of Hammond; for of course he must conclude, that Lady Catherine had only been the mistress of William’s rhyming fancy, since he had never spoken of her seriously to his father. O, if I could have dared to have told papa then of my attachment! but my tongue absolutely clung to the roof of my mouth. Yet I feel that I cannot go on without telling him. I cannot wait for Lord Culverden’s answer now. Do you advise me to tell papa? but if he should refuse — if he should be very angry?”

The sobs which now shook the bosom of Jane Mulcaster were those of deep, true distress. She had given her heart as freely and wholly to Major Stanhope, as she was wont to do gifts of lesser value to other dear persons. The happiness of her life indeed depended upon him ; for intimacy had developed qualities in him, as rare as attaching. The frequent letters of his kindred, shown solely to make his beloved Jane acquainted with all their characters, had given her deeper insight into his ; and from seeing how much her Charles was doted upon by those who had known him from childhood, she felt how worthy he was of her love now, and her obedience hereafter.

Honorina pressed the weeping girl in her arms with fond sympathy ; strenuously urging her not to let her present good resolution evaporate, but go directly and throw herself upon the mercy of her father, for having so long refrained from telling him the state of her affections ; confessing to him her venial sin of having already made that confidence to the only

person to whom, perhaps, she ought not to have made it— Stanhope himself.

Jane's courage rose and sunk several times, ere she ventured to execute this fearful task; but at length she went; whilst Honoria, who had hitherto been closeted with her alone, returned to the morning room, where they had left Miss Mulcaster and Henrietta.

The latter was known to be engaged to a young man who had just left Oxford for a curacy in Hampshire; but she conducted her sanctioned and modest attachment under such a deep shade, that it was evident she was rather incredulous of a noisy grief where the tenderest sentiment was alleged to be its source. William's room was directly over the one the party were now in; and by the stamping tread of his feet up and down its oak-floor, the occasional hurling of a chair or a table out of his disorderly path, the smothered sound of his not smothered groans, gave infallible note that he was there; and though out of sight, did not choose to be out of mind. It was, in-

deed, William's amiable infirmity to wish ever to be interesting to those he liked.

At another time, Honoria must have fallen back in her chair with suffocating laughter; there was something so ridiculous in such misery: but she was in the presence of William's sisters; and although Henrietta, with subdued archness, whispered, "That's an evident wasp-sting only," would not permit herself a single pleasantry.

Miss Mulcaster's Madonna brow had a pitying shadow over it, which honoured her tenderness too much to wish it dispersed by kindless mirth: — "Every one had their different way of loving," she observed with a struggling sigh; "and, sometimes, those likings which were thought the least of, were in fact the strongest: the younger a person was, she thought, the warmer were their affections; first feelings were so powerful! — Therefore she grieved for William; and was sorry to find that he had been quite in earnest, when he had been so good-natured as to let them tease him about

Lady Catherine, as if it had been only a flirtation like his other fancies before."

Honoraria could suggest no better comfort than the obvious one of William's certain misery with such a worldly character as Lady Catherine now proved herself, had she deemed it worth her while to have accepted him, after failing in other views.

Upon this conclusion all parties agreed; and they were beginning to enter into anxious discussion of Jane's concerns, when the happy girl flew in, with a face all tears and smiles; trembling, weeping, exclaiming, hoping, wishing, dreading Stanhope's appearance with his father's answer, and invoking ten thousand blessings upon the head of her own dear father. It was easy to guess how the interview had passed.

Jane had confessed, on her knees, her attachment, and her lover's application to his parents, owning her faulty cowardice with such true contrition, that the Dean could not persist in his attempt at displeasure.

Major Stanhope, by the openness of his visits, and pointed attention to Jane, had certainly afforded her father every facility for questioning his purpose; he, therefore, had been quite undisguised. The Dean had no quarrel with a man of delicate sentiment, for wishing to ascertain a young lady's feeling towards him, ere he proposed himself to her natural guardians; and for Jane's concealment there was the just and reasonable plea of girlish timidity and bashfulness. He had, consequently, no censuring remark to make; except that he thought the gallant officer ought to have consulted his own father ere he ventured to press a suit which might after all be laid under an interdict.

To this Jane could promptly answer on her lover's authority, that Lord Culverden's eldest son, being unhappily disinclined to marriage, from a connection of another sort, which had given his family the bitterest sorrow, its object being a married woman in his own circle, any honourable attachment of the

second son's would be hailed as a blessing. Lord Culverden had, indeed, long ago given Charles *carte blanche* on the subject ; merely stipulating for the person of his choice having a gentlewoman's birth and breeding, with unblemished reputation ; and that the Major should either wholly renounce the army after such an union, or exchange into one of the regiments of Life Guards.

All this met with the Dean's hearty approval. "Think, too, what dearest papa ended with !" added Jane. "O, I could have kissed his very feet ! 'Don't fancy, my child,' he said, in his way, 'that I looked on, without seeing ; or should have let you fall in love unless I had been a little in love with the swain myself. When I went to see my old friend, Harvey, last year, I saw this young man at church with his men ; — he staid the sacrament, a duty so rarely fulfilled by any young man, I grieve to say, that I could not help asking who he was. Harvey said a great deal of his good conduct in that obscure quarter, which helped to fix the

circumstance in my memory !' These were papa's very words ; — I could have worshipped him for them !"

Henrietta exclaimed at her father's slyness. " O, indeed, he was quite right !" repeated her sister, in haste to exonerate her beloved parent. " He had forgotten the name of this officer, till one day Charles spoke of Hythe as being quartered there ; and papa questioned him carelessly, till he satisfied himself he was the same person ; and as he had but just observed his attention to me, he chose to wait and watch, and not influence me one way or another. — O, papa is so noble to us all !" Miss Mulcaster smothered a sigh and looked aside. Jane then hastily exclaimed, she must go and tell William, and Honoria must go with her and try to persuade him to accompany them the next day to the races. Neither the beseeching glance, nor the snatching hand of the breathless Jane, could be resisted ! Honoria flew with her up the wide old staircase, into the gallery, upon which most of the

sleeping-chambers opened. They tapped at William's door; he did not notice it. Jane intreated admittance for herself, or a word exchanged through the key-hole with Miss O'Hara; William answered only by some sound between a sigh and a groan. Honoria then tried her powers.

In a tone happily blending the comic and the kind, the coaxing and the reproachful, she endeavoured to re-awaken his interest in the races of the next day, and in his favourite sister's present anxieties. She hinted, that Jane had much of the agreeable to tell him, if he would only hear and answer her. Arguments Honoria never used to persons under the influence of passion; but of persuasives she was liberal; — and the last one, was the moving picture of his best-beloved sister's affliction at his seeming indifference to her hopes and fears.

The duty of a disappointed man is universally allowed to be thorough despair. Mr. Mulcaster was obviously determined to maintain that notable character to the utmost. Possibly he be-

lieved himself quite in earnest ; though all who knew the expression of real anguish, must have seen that he was overacting his part, and tearing passion to rags. He pettishly begged to be left to himself ; — desiring Jane to be satisfied with the assurance that he was glad she was content, — and that he knew his father was very good ; — and all that sort of stuff ; — again requesting they would cease to trouble him.

Finding her attempt at obtaining a single glimpse of his *madmanship* ineffectual, Honoria then sought to negotiate for his appearance the next day with his sisters at Colonel Mason's breakfast. It was not probable that the Dean would go ; and if he did, unless William rode on horseback by their side, Jane could not properly go with Major Stanhope in his tandem ; and this she was to do, if Lord Culverden's letter were favourable. William knew how entirely Jane had set her little heart upon this gratification ; nay, William had promised her the happiness.

Honorina now touched the right string, and William's kind heart was relenting to it, when poor Jane, mistaking the silence of shame for that of obstinacy, hastily added, by way of a new inducement, "Well then, dear William, if not to please me, for the sake of Captain Adair's bay filly; you know you have betted on her, as she was bred at St. Cuthberts."

If the Dean spoilt Jane, Jane spoilt William: and when he was in a wayward humour, (which circumstance occurred not unfrequently, from mere whim,) he lorded over her loving nature rather unsparingly. Indignant at her putting a wager and a bay filly, in competition with his despair and Lady Catherine Eustace, he now angrily refused further parley, telling Miss O'Hara with a violence for which she was not prepared, that "she was as great a bore as his sisters, and that he wished they were all at the ———."

The fearful name which thus burst from him unawares, was so rarely heard

at St. Cuthberts, (never in a tone of levity,) that Jane, quite shocked and afflicted, burst audibly into tears; and Honoria who, affrighted as she too was, could have laughed at his moody folly, managed a submissive sigh, in compliment to the poor sister's sorrow. The door then hastily opened, and the repentant William appeared; his eyes inflamed, his locks standing erect, as his combing fingers had left them.

The expression of his features, and the conduct which had preceded this display of himself, clearly indicated that the source of the drops which actually stood upon his cheeks, was far from the heart's deep fountain. But the honest, unpractised Jane saw only that her brother's handsome face was red and swollen; and the whispering kisses she lavished on him when she ran back to his embrace, testified her firm belief that he was utterly bereft of future peace.

Such tender credulity touched Honoria with instant softness, and she looked at Jane with a fervent prayer, that she might

be as happy with Major Stanhope as her warmly generous nature deserved.

During the clasp of his now-comforted sister, William silently held out his hand to Honoria, in token of kindness, or of contrition. Honoria was firm to keep the other sex in what Hetty Macready termed "their proper place;" and she would not privilege her friend's brother, in unbecoming forgetfulness of what was due to a woman. "This is only a truce, remember;" she said, lightly resting her hand in his; "you are bound to appear on the Thursday at farthest to make me atonement for that shocking and wicked expression just now."

William did not answer; but his face was scarlet: as extricating himself from his sister's arms, he muttered some confused words of gentler dismissal, and retreating into his lair once more, betook himself to his allotted portion of lamentation and woe.

While the friends took a few turns up and down a long gallery ere they descended to the sitting-room, Honoria suc-

ceeded in quieting Jane's fears about her brother ; advising her to let his feelings, whatever they were, exhale themselves after any fashion he chose ; and be sure that they would then be speedily exhausted. She then renewed the subject of Jane's own promising affairs ; gladly agreeing to keep her engagement of letting herself be sent for the next day ; not merely to accompany them on the next, to the races, but to stay at St. Cuthberts for as many days as Mrs. Meredith would permit. If Lord Culverden were propitious, then Honoria was to share the general joy ; if he were not, she was to stay and weep with her friend far from the hated sounds of running horses, and martial music.

Luckily for the business going on at St. Cuthberts, Honoria was not called for till very late ; so that she had full time to vent all her admiration of Lady Wearmouth, to bless her stars for the good fortune of her uncle's hospitality to Captain Barrington, and to learn from the Misses Mulcaster that they too had shared

in the mother's joy, when they called at Ravenshaw the day Lord Wearmouth and William walked to the Rectory.

At last Lady Haverford fluttered in ; instead of a quarter of an hour, she had staid a full hour at Hexham Castle. Such *crowds* were staying in the house, all of whom she knew ! and Lady Catherine was so amusing ! and Lady Hexham had such *LOADS* of pretty things to show her, that were already sent to her daughter by Lord Brinkbourn's relations ! and Lord Hexham was so pompous and foolish ! All this the volatile Viscountess hurried out with her usual vivacity and volubility, quite unconscious of the painful interest taken in it by William's sisters, and totally mistaking the meaning of the Dean's smile as he listened to her, after coming courteously out of his study to welcome her and Honoria. But suddenly stopping, she resumed with a burst of delight at the sight of her old acquaintance the Misses Mulcaster grown from children into women ; insisting that she herself must be a hundred

years old at least; and enquiring with the utmost unction after the *too enchanting* brother.

With happy address, yet not speaking falsely, Sophia Mulcaster contrived to leave Lady Haverford in the error of believing he was not in the house, so further questioning was spared; and her gay Ladyship having first adjusted the Dean's easy chair, then hastily picked up somebody's glove, (for Lady Haverford did every thing for every body,) drew a worked hassock close to the great chair, and sat down at the Dean's feet to go on with her pretty gossip. The good divine was well inclined to give her plenty of line: never man angled more ably than he did, for all the nonsense of Lady Catherine.

"Lady Catherine showed me Lord Brinkbourn's picture," she added, "so exquisitely set! He's dreadfully ill-looking, you know, poor man — but so clever! and she really seems attached to him. I understand now from herself, that she liked him from the first, and had set her

heart upon having him from the first moment they met last Christmas at Chatfield."

"I don't doubt it," returned the Dean dryly.

"Well! I never should have fancied such a thing possible!" resumed Lady Haverford, who never took time to undeceive herself from imposition of any sort. "When I saw them at Chatfield, I thought she was caring for that very agreeable great fortune, Harvey Dalton: so, like a simpleton, I frequently rode miles away from them, when I was chaperoning her on horseback, carrying off the Marquis, and leaving her with Mr. Dalton. — How we laughed over my mistake, when she told me how often she wished me poisoned for my pains!"

"Doubtless:" responded the Dean: "particularly if Mr. Dalton did *not* propose himself and his great fortune, during your good-natured feint." "Henrietta!" he added, lowering his voice, and turning quietly to his third daughter, "do you know of any conducting tube from this room to the one above?"

Henrietta's arch, yet half-upbraiding glance showed she understood him; the Dean exalted his voice, "Your Ladyship speaks so softly:—I wish you could speak louder. I would fain fancy I am a little deaf to-day."

Lady Haverford tried to make her musical tones more sounding; but they could not reach William; though from the consciousness of *an arrival* below, he was now perfectly still. However she went on.

"It is quite refreshing to see a match of inclination! Lady Catherine was actually beside herself with joy; she *would* show me all the clothes and jewels,—such a superb suit of diamonds!—Lady Hexham, you know, never had any but the poorest things; so the poor dear girl, (so like a very young girl!) was in extasies to think she should actually have a finer necklace, than the Princess Royal had on at her marriage! Never could she be grateful enough to Lord Brinkbourn; if she devoted her whole life to him! She positively said that.—I

really never before gave her credit for such a grateful character."

"Wonderful indeed!" exclaimed the Dean composedly; "so grateful for a diamond necklace! the pretty neck itself, would of course offer itself to the axe, for any solid good to its generous donor."

Lady Haverford, without detecting the satire of this speech, continued to run on after nodding assent to the supposed compliment. "It is not quite settled whether they are to be married here, or in London: but some of her clothes are come down. One of the gowns was so ridiculously fine, that it made us die of laughing. Lady Catherine was so comical upon it; and (lowering her voice, and bending to the ear of Honoria,) so very amusing about her pretty nightcaps: she wondered how the Marquis would look in *his* nightcap — and quizzed his long chin so good-humouredly! — But what are you doing, my dear Mr. Dean? — what can you be writing, while I am speaking so fast? Not taking minutes of

my discourse I hope, as was the fashion in Sir Charles Grandison's days."

The Dean calmly folded and twisted up the bit of paper he had been writing on with pencil, and whisperingly bidding Henrietta slip that under her brother's door, renewed attention to Her Ladyship.

Lady Haverford, in defiance of the world's efforts to make her otherwise, was yet in many respects as single-hearted as Jane Mulcaster herself; and she was now so far from suspecting any design to draw her out, on the subject of her visit to Hexham, that she kept thanking the party present for not being as thoroughly bored, as she could see by his yawning her poor Zephyr was; and on she went, therefore, with a *naïveté* and hilarity, which pleased every one in spite of their subject. Thus unconsciously unmasking one of the most hollow-hearted, place-coveting young persons that had ever yet trafficked herself for a coronet.

Another half-hour was thus sportively played away; so that by the time Lady Haverford drove up to the Rectory, it

was five o'clock, and the footboy had to rid his hands of the tea-tray ere he could run and open the gate of the fore-court to the truant Honoria.

Lady Haverford quite unobservant of all that humbled the poor proud orphan in her home, bade her a thousand flattering farewells ; assuring her, she meant to remain at Ravenshaw, as long as her aunt would now keep her, "solely to cultivate intimacy with her, and those charming St. Cuthbert girls ;" reminding our heroine that on the Thursday they *must* unite into one party. Honoria joyfully gave the promise demanded, and the pretty Viscountess drove off.

This was certainly a day of blissful augury to Honoria, for she could actually walk into her aunt's parlour, with Ned and the tea-equipage : and having providently entreated to be forgotten at dinner, as her return must depend upon Lady Haverford, her slice of mutton and glass of wine were saved ; and Lord Wearmouth had sent Mrs. Meredith some spring venison with a polite card ! Mrs. Meredith,

therefore, was not more than taunting ; and Honoria *could* present her the note from Dean Mulcaster, which was to remind those at the Rectory of Miss O'Hara's engagements with his daughters, and to say the carriage would be sent for her on the ensuing forenoon. Mr. Meredith over-ruled a rising objection, by some timely remark about a Stilton cheese, which Miss Mulcaster had told him was on its way to his lady, in company with one for their own use.

CHAP. V.

THE next day was May-day. Honoria arose with the lark, to gather flowers and twist garlands, and dress a band of children, who were to go their usual rounds, with clean-washed faces, and pretty curtseys, collecting praises and pence.

She met the eager imps in her own garden, on the hill side; where seated in her arbour-tree, she made a score of young hearts happy, by making as many little figures as fine as flowers and ribands could dress them; and by garlanding a cosset lamb to walk along with them.

Her picturesque fancy was full of remembered groups of nymphs and sacrificial animals, seen on plaster casts of antique vases; and as her graceful hands involved the long tresses of ivy and briony, round the creature's neck and budding

horns, she could not help talking aloud to herself, of Arcadia and Tempe, of the Floral games, and the altars of Pan.

Having admired her own work with audible laughing emphasis; bestowed a little May-day gift upon each of her waiting attendants, (accompanied with a kiss and an exhortation to be good children, and keep out of mischief,) she dismissed them, and helped their lamb over a stile leading to the first farm they were bound to. Then after pondering awhile upon childhood, and its simple, yet fervid enjoyments, she was turning with a pensively-altered look towards her home; when a young man starting up from the grass on the other side of the hawthorn hedge, skirting her garden, looked over it, directly beside her.

Honorina never stopped to ascertain whose were the eyes that she felt, and was conscious of having met before. Ashamed of being detected not in the act of making May garlands, but in lauding them to herself;—aware from the young man's expression of countenance, that

he must have been peeping at her through the hawthorn, during the whole scene ; she sprang away, and ran with such haste down her garden into the waste of that name, belonging to the Rectory, and thence into the house, that she left one of her slippers behind.

Every pulse was throbbing with fright and flight, when she threw herself quite out of breath, upon the bed in her chamber. She was ashamed ; she was hurried ; she was convinced that the eyes which now troubled her recollection, were those of her knight of the shamrock. Yet if it were Mr. Gubbins, or rather Lord Francis Fitz James, why should she care so very much at his having overheard her folly ?

But it could not be that finest of finemen. Lord Francis Fitz James out before seven o'clock in the morning ? Impossible ! Lord Francis Fitz James who had been at a dinner in London, only two days before ! It was not likely. Yet, if it were indeed Lord Francis, she should now know him : — she should see him under the most

favourable auspices ; in the encouraging society of Lady Wearmouth, flatteringly represented by Lady Haverford, affectionately spoken of by his friend Mr. Mulcaster ! If he did not quite take a disgust to her silliness with the May children, she might even hope to banquet upon sympathy with his romantic feelings and poetical taste ; she might hear with her own ears, some of that eloquence which had been described to her by Captain Fitz Arthur, as exercised in support of her charge against the country of Mr. Frazer ; in short, she might in downright earnest, try to lose her heart to him, and win his.

Such a mixed character was Honoria, or rather so imperfectly was the dross cleared from her golden sense, that she first yielded to this absurd imagination ; then saw its absurdity, and laughed at herself : “ A man of whom I know nothing, except that he writes verses, and gives himself airs ! ” With this exaggerated exclamation, she started up from her resting place, and magnanimously fled from the foul fiend solitude, into the

wholesome atmosphere of certain active virtues, sure to be roused and exercised by herself and her uncle, at the breakfast-table of Mrs. Meredith.

The breaking of a sugar-basin caused a tempest of an hour's duration; and Honoria, having adventurously endeavoured to divert the storm from the pale, rueful lad, between whose finger of grease, and thumb of soot, the luckless bowl had perished — was on the verge of being commanded to take off her bonnet, and give up all notion of going to idle at St. Cuthberts, when the Dean's coach was announced, and the Stilton cheese appeared. During the latter article's examination, our heroine smiled adieu to her uncle, and curtsying, unseen to her aunt, glided out of the parlour.

She found her little trunk in the carriage, under the care of Mrs. Wood, the Dean's housekeeper, who was commissioned to tell Miss O'Hara, from Miss Jane, that she was far too happy to write. Mrs. Wood was qualified to explain the message she delivered. Many

years of tried fidelity, as the late Mrs. Mulcaster's personal servant, sanctioned her in speaking warmly, though with the utmost respect, of her young lady's prospects.

Honorio's heart overflowed with joy for her friend, when she heard that Major Stanhope had that morning been with the Dean even before breakfast, with proposals for Miss Jane : they had been found acceptable ; and as soon as settlements could be made out, they were to be married.

Lovers are generally liberal ; — successful ones are always in good-humour : so, of course, Major Stanhope had secured the favour of all the domestics at St. Cuthberts by a due distribution of smiles and money, whenever the slightest service afforded him a pretence for offering them. Mrs. Wood could quote every servant in the house, from the butler to the cow-boy, for some laudatory testimonial. Honorio listened, with pleased attention, to every circumstance which could throw more light upon the character

of him, to whom a pure, inexperienced, impressible heart was committing its happiness for this life — perhaps for that which is to come. She audibly lamented the absence of their mutual friend Mrs. Preston, who would have rejoiced so animatedly with her, for Jane's sake; and to whom Honoria ever longed to fly with every joy or grief of her own. But this was another agreeable surprise Mrs. Preston's absence had deprived her of the power of giving her. Everything connected with Ravenshaw, together with her discovery of her knight of the shamrock being, in fact, Lord Francis Fitz James; — every part of this she had only been able to narrate with her pen; and as Mrs. Meredith nearly exterminated the postman whenever he brought a letter, Honoria was ever afraid of inviting answers; therefore knew it must be long ere she could dare to write again to her maternal friend.

Casting a sighing glance towards Hazeldean, as the carriage drove down the village, she begged the coachman to stop

at the small tenement where lodged the *ci-devant* schoolmistress of Edenfell. Dame Wilson was childishly fond of flowers; and Honoria regularly brought her a nosegay every May-day. She now prayed Mrs. Wood to wait a moment, while she ran up stairs with her fragrant offering.

The neat bed in which Dame Wilson lay, was placed, for a cheerful look-out, so near the only window of her chamber, that, as Honoria sat down, she saw every object on the opposite side of the lane. The door of a mean house there, was thronged round by children, and one or two grown persons; through the midst of whom, a young man, with one arm resting in a silk handkerchief by way of sling, was seen smilingly passing from the door, taking his way towards the village inn.

The figure of this young man, the clustering of his raven hair round a brow of marble — nay, the colour of the handkerchief, transferred from his throat to his arm, leaving the former in free and

noble beauty, — brought back at once, before Honoria, the vision of him who had surprised her on the hill side : him, whom she had first seen at Arthur's Court, and knew to be her countryman.

It was then Lord Francis Fitz James ! Her whole face was in a glow ; while hastily enquiring what had happened in the cottage opposite, a girl, whom Captain Fitz Arthur had placed about his old school-dame, simply answered, that some of the May children, having thoughtlessly got into a cart by themselves, were trying to drive it, when the horse suddenly set off full speed, and was tearing down towards the steep bank of the river, when a gentleman, who had come to the Unicorn Inn just after sunrise, and had been loitering about with a pen and a pencil all the morning, threw himself between the cart and the stream ; and seizing the horse's head, with instant presence of mind, saved the shrieking children from probable death. The jerk of the horse's head had, however, sprained his shoul-

der ; and one of the little culprits' mothers had just been tying it up in his own handkerchief.

Had the performer of this amiable action been actually a perfect stranger to her, Honoria would have gone over to the house and asked a hundred particulars concerning him : but now some unaccountable feeling made her sensible that she should show embarrassment, with too lively an interest, and she was therefore obliged to be satisfied with this scanty detail.

Secretly assured of seeing this handsome and heroic personage at the races on the morrow, (if he were indeed Lord Francis Fitz James,) she kissed Dame Wilson with more than her wonted affectionateness, and retook her place in the carriage.

During her unusually silent drive with worthy Mrs. Wood, who, nevertheless, kept talking all the time of her ladies, it is humiliating to own that Honoria's reveries were fuller of herself, and her knight of the shamrock, than even of

her friend Jane and her substantial happiness ; it is to be hoped, that the very substance of that happiness may be an excuse for her thus wandering after uncertain visions.

What a figure, what a face her eyes had been eagerly scanning ! — what poetical paleness on the cheek ! — what nobleness on the brow, and in the fine moulding of the short upper lip ! — (that distinctive mark of Grecian beauty) — what inspiration in the air of the head, rising as it did from the open shirt-collar ! — and that smile ! Apollo himself, throned in his own light, had no beam so gracious !

Honorina was in fact under a dazzlement of admiration, partly deserved by its object, partly produced by her own exalted fancy, in consequence of numberless trivial circumstances, calculated to excite interest, and stimulate curiosity. She was, besides, half convinced that she ought to fall in love with such a wonder of mind and person ; and not very incredulous of her power of charming him in return.

The very arrogance of this feeling might have told Honoria that, as yet, not one spark from "Love's own altar" had fallen upon her heart; but Honoria was only beginning life, and knew nothing of her heart.

At St. Cuthberts she was received with tumultuous joy. How are they to be pitied who cannot feel the joy of sympathy! For the first five minutes nothing was said or done but embracing, kissing, exclaiming, congratulating, thanking, blessing, over and over again.

Honoria passed from the arms of one person to another, laughing and crying like Jane herself; the more strongly excited to the first movement by the sight of William Mulcaster standing amongst them, with a face quite as joyful as any other person's. She was too much afraid of giving him a hint to play the desperate lover, for audible expression of her satisfaction.

After the clamour of rapture had subsided, she was told circumstantially all the past and future plans of the lovers.

Major Stanhope was not to quit the army, for he liked having something to do, and he was fond of regimental business. He was, therefore, to effect an exchange into one of the heavy-dragoon regiments, which were never sent abroad except on occasions of imminent danger. A vacancy in one of these was sure to occur directly ; he was quite positive he should hear of a Majority in the Blues, or in one of the regiments of Life Guards, and there was not the smallest chance of his present corps being ordered for foreign service meanwhile.

Jane was determined to believe every thing she wished ; so her face was all smiles, her young heart all happiness, gratitude, and kindest affections ; and she was already bespeaking a “ long, never-ending visit ” from Honoria very soon after her marriage ; when Mr. Mulcaster ringing to know if his horse were ready, abruptly said he was going to ride over to Ravenshaw.

Honoria's foolish heart-flutter began again : — William faced directly round

upon her. "Well, Miss O'Hara," he cried, with a glance of mischievous meaning, "your hour, and my friend Gubbins's is come; my fellow passed him in one of the green lanes by Edenfell this morning, where he was sauntering about, after his usual fashion of idling, and rhyme-tagging. You will be pleased to remember that I mean you and Gubbins for each other."

Honor's exaggerated laughter gave excuse for her heightened colour, as she confusedly answered, "I put in my protest against any such disposal of my invaluable self, until I learn the reasons of the *alias* after your friend's name."

William now saw his secret was discovered, and a general disclosure of it, of course, ensued. Jane tried to scold Stanhope for having assisted in keeping it; Sophia proclaimed her hope of enlisting his admired Lordship into her army of followers; while her sisters quietly observed they should not wonder if his capricious temper made him shut himself up wholly in Ravenshaw, and so disap-

point general expectation. As Mr. Mulcaster could not give even a conjectured reason for His Lordship's masquerading in a green shade and light wig at Arthur's Court, and departing thence without making himself known to a single creature there — this caprice did not appear improbable: and though Honoria felt some diminution in her estimate of his character in consequence, still she was conscious that not to see Lord Francis at the races would be a mortification.

“But why did he call himself by such a ridiculous, frightful name?” enquired Sophia.

“From mere whim of course,” replied Major Stanhope, “or because he wished his acquaintance to know he wrote that little volume of verses, and did not want to be puffed or cut up by reviewers on account of his nobility. I remember, it was his cant name at Oxford.”

“What a name!” Honoria involuntarily exclaimed, “for such a creature!”

“There lay the joke!” cried Mr. Mulcaster; “there would have been no fun in

an Augustus Walsingham, or Henry Melville. He got it tacked to him, from a quiz coming up to him one day in the street, and enquiring if his *name wasn't Mr. Peter Gubbins*. From that moment we never called him anything else, when he was in the humour to bear it!" William then hurried on to declare his fixed resolution of bringing Lord Francis on the instant to St. Cuthberts, that he might fall a victim to the bright eyes, in whose service he had gained the palm of eloquence at Arthur's Court: and as the utter discomfiture of Mrs. Shafto appeared to have a principal share in this notable determination, a full confession of all that lady had said about Honoria and Captain Fitz Arthur was unawares made by William and his sisters.

This was, indeed, pouring oil upon fire: Honoria scarcely spoke; but her proud look, and quivering lips, threatened dire mishap to the luckless and unoffending person, whose preference had excited such envy and malignity. If Lord any one had offered his hand at that

moment, it is to be feared she would have accepted it.

Appearing to disdain the whole subject, she drew closer to Mr. Mulcaster, and asked him rather archly, "If he were going to bet upon Captain Adair's bay-filly on the fells to-morrow?" William comprehended her meaning. "Yes I am!" he answered fairly. "After all I had written up to me, and told afterwards to me, by Jane there, do you think I would waste as much breath as would blow out a candle, upon sighing over such a counterfeit soap-bubble? — not I! — I am come to my senses, and you shall see me take my revenge to-morrow in glorious style! But if ever I care one iota again for any of your false sex,—"
"Pick out my eyes with a ballad-maker's pen!" added the Dean entering, and quoting Benedict with more than his usual hilarity. William intercepted in the door-way, stopt respectfully to let his father pass him, though colouring high; then hurried off, beyond the reach of his gibes.

“Well, Miss O’Hara!” said the cheerful divine, advancing with the ceremonious mien and cordial look of antiquated manners. “So you come to find my Jane out of her senses with joy at the speedy prospect of leaving an indulgent father!”

Jane’s soft hand was fondly pressing in his, as he took the seat by her side, which Stanhope had promptly and properly quitted. The Dean continued: “And you have come too late for our *auto da fê* this morning: it took place at six o’clock.”

Honoraria enquired his meaning.

“O, we have been silent witnesses of William’s sacrifice to the indignant gods, of all the treasures he had accumulated during the course of his long and painful love for Lady Catherine Eustace. That lucky bit of short-hand which I had insinuated through a chink of his door yesterday, had the most complete success: after reading it, he issued forth from his den, breathing scorn and hatred to all your dissembling sex. I therefore look

to hear of him next, amongst the monks of la Trappe, or else associating with that meritorious gentleman, whom the London papers sometime ago designated by the name of *the Monster*."

"Papa, dear papa!" cried Jane, imploringly: the Dean was in his garrulous mood, and would not be stopped. Honoria's bright eyes were quite lost among their dark lashes with excess of mirth; then shone out in full, inviting joyance! their brilliant encouragement was not lost upon the speaker.

"There were such piles of satin paper burnt! one heap, all sonnets and songs, — another, little scraps and scrawls with the fair lady's own name, written by her own fair hand in all modes and moods, of course she had never *committed* herself by writing to him from herself. But there were charmingly flattering notes in her mother's name, of the same elegant penwomanship. Morsels of gauze, — ends of riband, — broken fans, — visiting tickets, — a dozen white gloves at least without fellows, — baskets full of

withered roses and violets, — an old artificial flower or two, intermixed, — a pencil caricature of the fond swain himself, done by the fair Inconstant, nearly effaced by his own kisses ; — and last, not least, a charming pocket-handkerchief, the cambric admirably wrought in hearts and darts at the corners, and the body of the interesting article slightly tinged with a little bloom from the cheek of its most singularly inartificial owner. No wonder this *morceau* was the last given to the flames. On my word, I think William never saw his mistress's bloom on it till that very moment, if I may hazard a guess from the expression of his countenance."

"And where could you have the barbarity, dear sir, to stand and witness all this?" asked Honoria, scarcely able to hush her laughter at such a ludicrous picture.

"I took a quiet peep from my dressing-room window," returned the Dean ; "being confidentially apprised of what was about to take place, I there stationed

myself behind a sloped shutter, and so beheld William as he stood on the grass-plat below, sacrificing to Vulcan. It was a pleasing sight; and I could not help putting my head out at its conclusion, crying, 'So perish all the enemies of William Mulcaster!' I ought rather to have said, 'So perish every memorial of every coquette!' Craving pardon, however, of all such young ladies as may be emulating that high character. — My daughter Sophy, of course."

"Now, papa, you are absolutely odious," exclaimed Sophia, with hardy cheerfulness. "You know I have been trying all my life to make somebody like me well enough to give me an opportunity of using them ill, and I have never succeeded yet."

"All in good time, child! all in good time;" repeated the Dean: "and if you don't succeed in using some silly youth as ill as Lady Catherine has done William, you will infallibly play the trick to your father, as —"

Jane's hasty, affectionate kiss, stopped

the words that were to follow. Major Stanhope made a pathetic appeal in defence of his fair betrothed ; and softer feelings awakening, the Dean at once discarded his bantering tone, and fell into conversation that honoured his character, both as a parent and a divine.

Major Stanhope having recovered from the temporary confusion into which his future father-in-law had thrown him by his jesting reproach, was soon drawn advantageously forth ; and a succession of family anecdotes were given by him in answer to the Dean's apparently careless questions, which tended to strengthen the prepossession already felt for him by all his auditors.

William staid at Ravenshaw so long, that he reappeared only when the family were sitting down to dinner. He came back manfully fortified in his resolutions against female influence.

Lord Francis had owned to having been once very ill-used, as well as himself, (though William could not get at the lady's name or fate,) and they had

railed at the sex in good set terms, — at all of them, indeed, except his own sisters, Honor O'Hara, and Lord Francis's grandmother.

“And why Lord Francis's grandmother?”

“Because he begged it.”

“And why Honor O'Hara?” Honoria did not ask that question.

“Why, because Lord Francis had first put in an especial plea for his kind old grandmother; and William chose to have his brand out of the fire as well as he; and because Lord Francis vowed he had seen her that very morning sheep-shearing: moreover, he had got a certain slipper, either of hers or Cinderella's, which he meant to keep and worship.”

“Thou art a miserable Bozzy to thy Johnson!” exclaimed his father. “Surely the classical Lord Francis talked rather of the silver-footed Thetis. — That poor slipper! I foresee its fate!”

“What fate, sir?” William unluckily questioned.

“Burning, my son! — burning!”

William looked foolish, and Honoria blushed: not that she suspected it would die the death of fire, in consequence of her scorn or inconstancy.

Jane Mulcaster, whose heart was always open to expectations and wishes for her friends, and who was now too happy herself not to desire to see everybody the same, in the same way, exchanged a glance with Stanhope, which distinctly said, "*Now we'll make that match, if we can!*"

"What a wondrous portion of freemasonry may lie in a single look!" observed her father, intercepting the glance. "You and Major Stanhope are Grand Masters, evidently: poor Miss O'Hara, and I, are but novices! — however, I must beg to have the mystery cleared up, of Miss O'Hara's sheep-shearing, and Cinderella's slipper."

Honoria, thus called upon, was obliged to repeat not only her adventure before breakfast, (taking care, however, to do it as negligently as possible,) but her second glimpse of Lord Francis at the

end of Edenfell. William burst out triumphantly: "There, sir! — now you'll allow that Lord Francis has something more in him than fancies and dictatorialism! — Many a fellow would have gone on and never troubled his head about the cart or the children. When I asked him what he had done to his arm, he just said he had hurt it somehow, — and not a word more. Nobody at Ravenshaw knew any thing about it."

"Well! you may bring your fine gentleman here," replied the Dean, with a face expressive of satisfaction: "though I was somewhat prejudiced against him. You may ask him to dinner when you like."

William actually laid down his knife and fork, and stared at his father with eyes as red as his cheeks, through astonishment.

"*May* ask him to dinner! — faith, I *may* ask him; but the query is, whether he'll come. When a man is in such request as Lord Francis is, he generally finds out that he is considered to confer honour, not to receive it."

“Why then, let me tell you, sir,” returned his father, dryly, “that the young man who does not consider himself honoured by being invited into the domestic circle of an old Christian minister, with four virtuous daughters round him, is either a great deal too high, or too low for my acquaintance. However, he may settle that question himself — for he shall be asked to St. Cuthberts with all the respect due to his rank, and your regard for him.”

The kind tone in which the Dean concluded, effaced whatever had been unpleasant in the rebuke given by his first words. William, so encouraged, proceeded to talk of his Eton days, when he had been the fag of Frank Fitz James, and almost spoilt by his indulgences.

“But haven’t I some impertinent recollections,” resumed his father, “about his former fag; a lad of our county too, whom he lorded over with memorable exercise of power?”

William explained that, by saying the

boy was disagreeable in himself, and not affectionate; adding, that when once a person convinced Lord Francis they would do any thing to please him, they might do what they liked ever afterwards, and he would go to death for them.

“How generous! how very attaching!” involuntarily burst from the lips of Honoria.

“You ladies are bound to think so,” observed the Dean, smiling. “You ought to dignify the love of power by the name of a virtue, since it is your own besetting sin. And can any thing be so generous or so fine, as paying one’s debts — loving them that love us?”

“Oh, if my father is going to give us his pulpit talk —” William’s irreverent, because petulant whisper, did not escape his father’s quick ear; he noticed it by a look that made the feeling of shame do more than colour his son’s cheek; then with an eye expanding again into playfulness, he resumed to Honoria: “It was certainly most magnanimous in the stripling Lord Francis, never to knock

the child William down, every time he broke bounds for him, and risked a flogging to get His Lordship perhaps a penn'orth of whip-cord! Most engaging in him, not to wring the meek boy's neck off, while the child stood to hear himself arraigned for faults and neglects he never was guilty of! Most god-like in bounty too, while bestowing a cheese-cake upon the urchin whom he had previously starved into telling a lie on his account, — not to mention the high lesson of virtue this honourable practice teacheth!"

Both William and Major Stanhope having been Eton boys, spoke at once in the same vehement and declamatory tone. The Dean laughed, and said, "Well, I'll allow my picture is absolute caricature; yet will I maintain seriously, that it is no great commendation of a man, to say he is kind to those who nearly deify him! I grant that it is unwise to let affection increase to fondness for persons to whom we are matters of indifference; but unless we regard our associates

more from their intrinsic qualities, than their particular preference for us, we are but lovers of our own selves. I have generally found that those who have professed inability to esteem goodness for its own sake, were persons inclined either to self-conceit or to tyranny. However, in spite of the fantastic fooleries I hear said of William's idol, I am quite willing to believe he is defamed in descriptions given by the bad taste of his worshippers; and Miss O'Hara seems not disinclined to the same laudable scepticism, till she may judge for herself."

Honor's mantling blush was ready to answer in the affirmative, as she said, "I remember your son once told me that when he broke his arm at Eton, and could not be moved from fever, Lord Francis staid with him through part of the vacation, to nurse and amuse him. That makes me inclined to like His Lordship in spite of his arrogance."

"Yes, nothing could be kinder than he was!" exclaimed William triumphantly.

"Ah yes! I cry him mercy, I had

“forgotten it!” was the Dean’s remark. “But your mother would not; so to Ravenshaw I will go, for her dear sake as well as yours, William.”

Miss Mulcaster, seeing her father’s eyes suffuse at the mention of her mother, whom she alone had been of an age to appreciate fully, considerably asked some question about the rest of the party at Ravenshaw.

William had brought various congratulations on Jane’s prospects from Lady Wearmouth, who was not yet allowed to go out, even in her carriage. Lady Haverford he had only encountered in the hall as he was coming away, for she had been out the whole forenoon and afternoon paying visits; but she would be at the officer’s gala the next day, and so would Lord Francis. Lady Haverford had sent ten million of loves to Miss O’Hara by him, with the assurance that the whole thing would lose its charm to her, if any thing kept Miss O’Hara away.

“Methinks the Lady doth profess too much!” muttered the incorrigible Dean.

Honorina looked up at him with one of her most beseeching eyebeams, clasping her hands together in mock petition, "O sir! pray sir! do not blight all my fancies! Now you have nearly demolished my idolatry of my country's champion, do spare me my new acquaintance, Lady Haverford."

"I will spare her then," exclaimed the Dean, "for the sake of that respectably moderate term, acquaintance. Since she has not already inveigled you into calling her your friend, as she would immediately have done my credulous Jane, — I am content. But I must find a fault in you amongst others. Prithee consider what a sorry return this moderate phrase sounds for ten million of loves!"

"Do let us run away, Isabella," cried Sophia, starting up from the dessert; "Papa is in his most mischievous humour, so we had better take wing at once."

"Not without authority;" cried the Dean, as the young ladies rose simultaneously. "I am full as jealous of power as my Lord Francis Fitz James himself,

or his humbler imitator, my son, there. One moment! — I dissolve the house! — Now unworthy members you may withdraw.”

Even Honoria was not sorry to escape from the fancied inquisition of the Dean's and William's eyes, while Lord Francis was spoken of. Never till now had she thought the reverend humourist's raillery more caustic than amusing; but never till now had she felt personally bitten by it. Many of his observations, though allowed to be overcharged, dwelt in her thoughts, buzzing and stinging like gnats, as often beaten off, as often returning. And as her inclination to like both Lord Francis and Lady Haverford was strong in proportion to their evident wish of inspiring regard, she revolted at the notion of the one being actuated by the mere love of power, the other by a feverish wish for popularity.

On quitting the dining-parlour, Miss Mulcaster retired to her established settlement of work and work-table, in a window-recess of the large India-papered sitting-room, pursuing there some rumin-

ations of her own in pensive silence. Sophia betook herself to the review of her attire for the morrow, as it was proceeding under the needle of her maid. Henrietta stole away for an hour's solitude in her chamber, where she was accustomed to devote much of her time in qualifying her mind, as well as her heart, for sympathy with the high pursuits of her future partner through life. Jane and Honoria went to walk round the flower-garden, that Jane might talk solely of her Charles, till he should join them and repossess himself of her ear, and her eyes.

Music, chess, and whispered tender-
nesses on the part of Major Stanhope,
filled up the evening after the scattered
party re-assembled in the drawing-room.
Family prayers concluded it ; — sanctify-
ing the blameless cheerfulness of previous
good spirits, and privileging those who
thus gave God thanks for past and present
mercies, in believing that future blessings
would be yielded to their hopes ; or that,
if these were to be withdrawn, strength

to bear up under the dispensation would be granted to the feeble soul.

If men were quite in the secret of women's hearts, it is to be feared that some who are without the grace of devotional impulses, would often affect them : for when does the manly head appear so noble as when bowed in the act of reverence to Him, "who made man after his own image?"

As Honoria's eye glanced momentarily over the kneeling figures of Major Stanhope, and William Mulcaster ; remarking the unaffected humility of both their countenances, she could not but recall a similar scene at Arthur's Court, where she had once passed a night since Delaval was its inmate. The artless piety in the face of good Sir Everard, — the holy fervour kindling more and more on Hylton's pale brow, the reverential attention of a long train of servants grouped behind Mrs. Fothergill, — and the deeply penetrating tones of Fitz Arthur's voice, — all these were present to her on the instant, with a fulness of feeling which

she wondered why she felt. Aware, however, that sound religious principles would ever be of the first consequence to her, she inwardly resolved to ascertain those of her imaginary favourite, ere she really suffered him to engross one partial thought.

With this laudable resolution, she exchanged good nights with her surrounding friends, and retired to the tranquillity of her own chamber.

CHAP. VI.

MAY-DAY at Arthur's Court brought agitation and events there too.

Delaval Fitz Arthur reached Morpeth in the mail, by daybreak; whence he proceeded in a chaise to his own home. As the hall-door was opened for him by the grey-headed porter, the sounds echoing through that and the passages, made him well aware that his youngest brother was come home; and in the full exercise of all the rights and privileges of the most rebellious and uproarious boy "ever unwhipt of justice." Smacking of whips, hurling of weights, bursting of crackers, crashing of pottery balanced on window or door-frames, shrill whistles, squalls, shouts of "Mrs. Fothergill! Mrs. Fothergill!" all over the house, with other indescribably hideous sounds, announced

that Master Thomas had re-assumed the sceptre of power and plague.

Fitz Arthur, upon whom a shower of burs fell from an upper window, just as he was getting out of the chaise, entered the house, laughingly picking them off his coat sleeve, though quietly determined to put an end to his brother's mischievous habits, and poor Mrs. Fothergill's terror of him, in a very short time.

Thomas was self-destined to the navy; and as a completely classical education was not necessary to make a boy brave, or skilful as a sailor, his brother had obtained Sir Everard's consent to have him taken from school, and left to his management for mathematics, and such bodily exercises as might fit him for an active and dangerous profession. Fitz Arthur knew that a thorough knowledge of Latin would render the acquirement of most modern tongues easy to the boy; in that he was qualified to perfect him: but he had the culture of religious principles, and self-governing habits, far more at heart than any other acquirements, and

to that desirable end, he meant seriously to devote his every power. With his thoughts upon this subject, he passed through the hall.

Sir Everard met him at the door of his own snug morning room, where, had it not been for the flow of unwonted satisfaction spread over his generally calm countenance, his son might have supposed him indifferent to the details of the momentous business which he had been transacting in London ; for the former hastily interrupted his assurance that all was amicably settled with Mr. Stephen, by exclaiming, “ Ah well ! well ! — I have something of much greater consequence to talk about.”

In some surprise and uneasiness Fitz Arthur followed his father into the room, and sitting down by him, enquired what it was he had to hear.

Sir Everard had now changed his mind ; he would hear his son quite out, and then broach his own subject.

Fitz Arthur knew that Miss Clavering was coming to take possession of her

newly acquired estates ; and that as he was one of Mrs. Branspeth's executors, he would be thrown into perpetual business with her, or for her. He knew that for the sake of being near Aycliffe, she was coming to their neighbour's, Sir John Henderson, (his partner in the executorship,) where she and her second sister were to stay till Mrs. Clavering and the younger girls returned from Lisbon. She might be kept there by delay on her mother's part, for a month or more ; he could not then escape going where she was, almost every day. Had his father any wish to utter connected with these circumstances?

Recollecting a former short conversation on the subject of this amiable heiress, he now found a cloud gathering over his spirits, while relating what otherwise he would have done with joyful cheerfulness, the satisfactory termination of his interviews with Mr. Stephen ; and he yielded to the temptation of possibly preventing a painful call upon him, by adding,—
“ One circumstance which a happy

chance brought before me, has given me peculiar pleasure, since it is always a pleasure to do a fellow creature's character justice. I met with Mr. Stephen, the very man to whom it was said, that the gentleman you have heard Miss Clavering was to have married, lost two thousand pounds just before her father's arrival ; and upon which, (the gentleman either being bound by a promise, or by a false notion of delicacy, refusing to explain while he solemnly denied the charge,) the match broke off. The money was actually lost by a Mr. Chesterfield, who had been attached to the other's sister ; and Miss Clavering's lover having tracked him to this gaming-house, and come there solely to persuade him away, finding him in an agony of despair, without a sous to answer this last loss, gave the winner a draft on his banker for the amount : thus stripping himself of all he had left out of a relation's bequest some months before."

"A fine fellow !" exclaimed Sir Everard, to his son's surprise and great relief.

"So you are going to tell this to Miss Clavering. Do you expect it will make her recall her spark!"

Fitz Arthur answered hesitatingly, for he doubted some extraordinary understanding between his father and the heiress, "I really cannot pretend—I—as one left in trust by Mrs. Branspeth, for her heiress, I ought not to promote a marriage she did not approve: yet as I think it was principally because she believed the young man a gamester, and a dissembler in consequence, my conscience would upbraid me if I did not put Miss Clavering in possession of this very important testimony in her former lover's favour. And I do assure you, dear sir, that I think in the main he deserves her,—and that if it were not for one circumstance, I should heartily desire to see her his wife."

Fitz Arthur pronounced the last decisive words with much fear of their effect upon the glow of his father's looks: what then were his mingled emotions of surprise, alarm, gratitude, regret, and final

transport, when Sir Everard all at once burst forth into a disclosure of his conversation with Mrs. Shafto, (to whom, however, he credulously gave credit for misinformation, and well-meant intention,) detailing his own deductions from it, his own after-observations upon Honoria, and his own proceedings about the pictures and the Cumberland property.

“And now, Delaval,” he concluded, “you are entire master of Greyscote, and free to give it any mistress you choose. I long for a daughter to cheer my old age : and if it is not to be Miss O'Hara, if you like any other charming girl, name her. So I do but see you happy I don't much care where she comes from, — now I have managed so as you may afford to marry, without thinking of a fortune.”

“Dear father ! — dear sir ! — O no, no !” Fitz Arthur hesitatingly exclaimed. “My heart has had no wishes except for your — at least I tried that it should not. It would be robbing my brothers ; — it would be base in me to take advantage.” He stopt, and buried his crim-

soned face in his hands, ending these broken sentences by an agitated sigh.

"Don't stop short, Delaval," resumed Sir Everard, encouragingly. "Is it me or your fair mistress you are afraid of?"

"I fear both!" was his son's tremulous reply. "Her want of fortune, and your overpowering kindness, ought to steel me against this sharp temptation: and how do I know whether she cares enough for me? — What do I say? Such an angel cannot care for an every-day man like me! O no, no — it must not be thought of — keep your generous gift for your own comforts, dearest father, and let me continue only a sharer with my brothers of this beloved home."

Again Fitz Arthur buried his face in his hands, and sat in torturing conflict with himself: — thrilling at the bare possibility of being empowered to pour out his long-restrained feelings at the feet of Honoria, and agitated by the fear that such indulgence would even now be a sin against family bonds.

Sir Everard's purpose was, however,

too steadfast to be thus shaken. He detailed his own expectations of domestic tenderness and attention from such a daughter as Honoria was likely to prove; insisted upon the advantages of such an affectionate watcher over Hylton's health and retired life; and owning, that he could have wished his son had not followed the family fashion of fixing affection upon portionless beauty, pressed him so strongly to give his old father the joy of seeing him happy in the way which he himself had found the happiest in life, that Fitz Arthur actually relented into a confession of his long-suffering love, together with its sad doubt of return, and its present dread of sinning by accepting gratification at the expense of his parent's future ease in circumstances.

Sir Everard showed much ingenuity in combating both his son's position concerning his future circumstances, and his notion of Miss O'Hara's indifference. The less Honoria seemed to like him more than as a friend, situated as she was, the more probable was it that she

loved him dearer :—the more obviously she shunned him, the better proof did she give of her abhorrence of mercenary views, and her delicate dread of being suspected of them.

Sir Everard could remember twenty little incidents which had not struck him at the time, but which he now marshalled in good order, as a body of evidence in favour of his assertion, that she was heartily attached to his son, from his own merits. She had been four or five times to Arthur's Court since Delaval's absence, although part of the month she had been confined to the house nursing her uncle, and she had always asked after him with particular interest : and the Baronet recollected that when she heard his son was left in trust for Miss Clavering, she had asked several questions respecting that young lady, which proved her to be flatteringly uneasy about her. Hylton too, after being let into his father's secret, had borne his raptured testimony to Miss O'Hara's great pleasure in hearing him talk of his dear De-

laval. Nay, Hylton recollected her praising his brother's figure as they were looking at him from the window, managing a fiery horse. In short, the result was, that even the modest Fitz Arthur, though as much in love as man could be, therefore as laudably and absurdly inclined to doubt the lady, and disparage himself as your true lovers ever are, was finally brought to credit a little of what others, he was told, firmly believed in its full extent.

Nothing appears so much to convince every description of man, of a woman's preference for him, as her involuntary admiration of his person. Why this should be the case, the wiser sex must explain; for with women it is exactly the reverse: they may like the tinkling of flattery on their beauty, but they rarely believe in professed attachment, unless their manners and dispositions are avowed to be its object.

Delaval Fitz Arthur was evidently as weak upon this point as any of his multitudinous brethren; and the moment he

heard, (though with deep confusion,) that Honoria animatedly pronounced him graceful, hope dawned in his breast.

Having now entirely satisfied himself that such a daughter would brighten the declining years of his father, and benefit those of his young brothers; such a wife indemnify him for the sacrifice of prouder views and more powerful connexions, he gratefully, tremblingly almost, acquiesced in the felicity thus unexpectedly offered to him.

How the proposal was to be made, and to whom, was the next consideration. Sir Everard had a notion that it would come with more effect from him, as more flattering to Miss O'Hara, and that consequently he had better go the next day and make it in person to Mr. Meredith, when his niece would be at the officers' races, and no interruption need be dreaded.

Delaval was not quite sure this would be the best course. He had been a whole month away; Miss O'Hara might in that time have seen some other person

she could prefer. He distrusted his own power over her even yet. Perhaps it would be better to go the next day to this gay scene, where he would be certain of seeing her, and discovering from her manner of welcoming him back, whether any stronger impression had been made by another man on her heart. If a favourable opening were given him there, then he might hazard the avowal himself; — if not, after consideration would settle whether it were to be made at all, and how.

To this arrangement Sir Everard contentedly yielded; yet so amiably anxious was he for crowning what he believed the mutual attachment of Honoria and Delaval, that, had he not known by a note from the former to Hylton, that she was then at St. Cuthberts for some days, he would certainly have ordered out his coach, and gone off at the instant to the Rectory, for the sake of sooner bringing his son into her presence. As it was, he contented himself with accompanying his agitated Delaval to Hylton's apartment, whither

he hurried now, to make that interesting boy a sharer in his hopes and wishes.

They found Mrs. Fothergill taking shelter in the sanctuary of an invalid's room, from persecution, though not pain; —for she was suffering from a dozen bruises, and a sprained ankle, got by falling over a trunk, which Master Thomas had placed in the passage to her room, ere he set off all the alarum bells, and called "Fire!" in the middle of the preceding night.

Thomas was now said to be IN DISGRACE, for an act which might have endangered the life of Hylton, had not the latter guessed the trick, from the voice making the outcry; and he was now formally banished from all the inhabited apartments by his ill-judging father. An injury for which he was *manfully* indemnifying himself, by roaming over every other chamber, making the most hideous noises, and doing all the mischief possible. That night, the maids predicted, no bed would escape

a strewing of cowage, except only those of his father and brother.

Poor Hylton's meek cheek showed, by a hectic spot, that his head was splitting with these dissonant sounds ; — Mrs. Fothergill, deaf as she was, demonstrated by different movements of her face, that she heard Thomas only too well. She sat in a sunny nook, busily knitting a stocking for that unfortunate member of her body, which now found support on a high cushion ; and after the first pleased recognition of her best friend, Delaval, pursued her work at too great a distance from the others to catch a word of their conversation.

Bright was the joyous sparkle of Hylton's eyes as he welcomed his brother back, and half rose to his folding arms ! Every impulse of that chastened spirit was a pious one ; and " Thank God ! " was uttered before he breathed the name of Delaval, to himself. The affectionate elder brother remarked upon his better looks, questioned him of his health, his amusements, his employments during his

long absence ; and gave him, in return, answers to all his enquiries concerning London concerns.

At length the last and dearest subject was entered upon ; and Fitz Arthur's confidence was more than repaid, not merely by the gentle boy's tearful sensibility to their general interest in the character of Honoria, but by his repetition of many a word and action of hers, calculated to inspire confidence in her preference.

Although Fitz Arthur's hopes even now began to faint, from his previous habit of despondency on the same subject, he was cautious not to give utterance to the fear again ; — since he had discovered, that an idea of Miss O'Hara's possible indifference to him, was the only thing Sir Everard could not bear with temper : — that, in short, if she were to avow such indifference, his father would at once credit all that had been repeated to him by Mrs. Shafto.

As Fitz Arthur looked alternately from the elated countenance of his single-

hearted father, to the more tenderly touched one of Hylton; his whole soul seemed to overflow with grateful affection. By what a sacrifice that honoured parent had purchased the means of thus seeking happiness for him! Yet if it should prove of no avail, — if Honoria should refuse his hand, — the pictures, endeared by association with a dear wife's memory, would have been parted with, for no good. Here Fitz Arthur checked himself. By the sale of them, Sir Everard had cleared one estate; an effort he would not have made without such an aim in view. Thus, end as Delaval's fond hopes might, that solid advantage would abide. As mere objects of taste, exquisite as the Raphaels were, he would cheerfully have exchanged them for freedom from debt and reproach; and even as memorials of his mother's sway over her husband's affections, he was ready to applaud the sacrifice. In Fitz Arthur's opinion, the very glories of the material world itself, were dust in the balance, when compared

with self-accusation in an honest man's breast.

As he imagined, in spite of rising apprehension, the felicity of dwelling under the same roof with his father after his marriage — for he resolved never to make another home to himself, — many a sweet vision floated before him; — and he would soon have forgotten in these, every thing really around him, had it not been for his little brother's persevering noises.

Nothing could be less in harmony with a lover's reveries than the whooping and hallooing of the urchin, Thomas; who now came with an insolent bounce against the door, with his fist, by way of vengeance for the exile of his person.

“Ay! there you see!” exclaimed Sir Everard reluctantly, “harsh measures will do no good, Delaval. It is of no use sending that poor boy to Coventry, as I have done, all day, just for frightening Mrs. Fothergill last night; so you had better let him in to see you.”

“I think so too, dear sir!” returned Fitz Arthur, going to obey, yet resting

his hand on the lock: "but since you have sentenced him to Coventry, let his return be a favour granted to me."

Sir Everard nodded assent, and Thomas was admitted. Dirt and daringness were never better blended on any face of eleven years' growth than in Master Thomas's. He stood bolt upright, in a suit of new clothes, torn half off his back; with locks bolt upright; and as if scorning to enter where till now he had been shut out.

Hylton's kind voice, and stretched out hand, welcomed him in. Fitz Arthur took his lumpish fist, for the boy kept it fast closed. "Well, Thomas, I am glad to see you! — grown taller by an inch, I think, than when I went for you at Christmas." (Thomas mumbled sulkily). "You and I must rout out the target and arrows, that have had a sinecure these last eight years; and play cricket together, and ride together. I know you'll consent to be my companion, in return for my begging you out of disgrace just now."

Thomas stared and reddened, partly

from pleased surprise, partly from good shame, and bad shame. Yet he stuck closely to the doctrine of his own merits; beginning a vehement defence of himself, and accusation of Mrs. Fothergill for not knowing how to take a joke.

“A sprained ankle is no joke, you will allow,” observed his brother, with determined forbearance; “at *least* it is a jest which I hope nobody will choose to make you the subject of at present, otherwise I shall lose my playfellow. Come, dear boy, we will all shake hands with you now, in full confidence that you will leave off these childish tricks. To-morrow you shall have an opportunity of showing how much you can behave like a man; for you shall have the pony, and ride with me to see the races on the Fell. From to-morrow, therefore, I shall expect you will amuse yourself with men’s sports as I do, and then go to something better.”

Thomas gave a most unmanly yell of joy, while fervently protesting he would from that moment turn over a new leaf,

and be a match for his elder brother at any thing he pleased ; only begging that he was not to have his brains cracked all day with Greek and Latin, and catechisms, as he saw Hylton doing.

“ You may come and help me at a pleasanter duty, then, just now ; ” observed Hylton sweetly ! “ Abbot says the May-children are at their dinner, and we shall just be in time to help their pudding.”

This was a rural feast regularly given by Sir Everard to gratify his invalid son, whose retired life rendered home amusements desirable, and whose benevolent disposition made amusement sweeter, when it pleased those who like himself had few pleasures.

It was Hylton's custom to be carried into the hall, when the children dined, that he might see them eat, and hear their blameless conversation ; more than indifferent himself to the delicacies which bad health interdicted, he yet delighted in seeing others temperately relish them, especially the offspring of the poor. The office of dispensing the tarts and creams,

fruit and cakes, of which this pastoral feast consisted, was to him one of positive enjoyment; a glass of sweet wine drank by each little guest to the health of Sir Everard, was on that day only drank also by Hylton; after which a piece of silver was given to each, and the party broke up.

Delaval Fitz Arthur had not witnessed a May-day at his own home for nearly eight years; for though he was returned the last May-day, he happened to be absent from Arthur's Court. He now stood by the crowded table, where Hylton and Thomas were presiding amongst a set of happy little faces, with a heart full of remembrances.

At this table, amongst just such faces, how often had he and his brother Hedworth sat, the little gods of the feast! — How well he remembered the joyous face of his brother, his cheerful young voice, the free hand with which he dealt out the piled cheesecakes which it was his province to help! How well he remembered, too, the soft step of their kind, second mother, lingering and smiling round the

buzzing circle ! That mother, that brother,—where were they?—and he was still in the cheerful sun, warm with life, and hope, and happiness !

Fitz Arthur turned from the plenteous board with a stifled sigh ; unwilling to let his father read any thing on his brow, which might cloud the artless joy of his, and resolutely denying himself the indulgence of vain regret, at a moment in which every throb of his heart ought to be gratitude.

How he managed to get through the many hours intervening between that time and those of the next day, when he was to see Honoria, it is vain to conjecture : but live through them he certainly did ; — though, I will not affirm that he was ever calm enough to sleep a single instant, during the night : that night on which Honoria had retired to her rest, with a fancy full of Lord Francis Fitz James !

CHAP. VII.

“WHAT a day for these races!” — “What a day for rambling about!” severally exclaimed Jane Mulcaster, and Honor O'Hara, as they entered the morning drawing-room in St. Cuthberts, at the same moment by different doors.

Jane was just come from the greenhouse, where her admiring lover had been giving a tasteful finish to her dress, by selecting a single rose for her bouquet; and Honoria issued from the toilets of Sophia and Henrietta; her own having yet to commence.

Honoria looked out on the chesnut groves, already promising their beautiful flowers; and then up at the shining clouds floating over the blue sky. “A year ago, such a day as this, I should have been roaming away by myself, in the Fitz Arthur woods,” she exclaimed. “Heigho! for those times of dear savage liberty,

when nobody knew me, and nobody cared for me out of Edenfell village ; so nobody minded where I went, or how I went. But now I must not go any where *by myself*, for fear of being met, and thought very strange, — very improper !”

“ And do you wish no one should care for you out of Edenfell ?” asked Jane Mulcaster, with affectionate reproach.

Honorio's answer was a half-laughing kiss of tearful sensibility. Her heart was always open to tenderness, even when her spirits were highest. All awakened now to gaiety, and seeing William Mulcaster pacing the room, with wreathed arms, as if in serious thought, she softly repeated, —

“ ‘ Stately stept he east the ha’
And stately stept he west !’

“ Pray, Mr. Mulcaster, may I crave your royal leave to wear pink ribands to day, for none other become me ? Henrietta tells me you have taken such an aversion to the flower itself, that you mean to strike even *couleur de rose* out of the list of colours for ever.”

“ Pshaw,” cried William, between

smiling and frowning. Lady Catherine had formerly ever matched the rose in his button-hole, by one in her fair bosom. Jane now hastily turned her back, putting her hand over Stanhope's late offering, as if to shield it from destruction.

"No edict to the contrary?" questioned Honoria, "then to bright rose ribands, do I render up myself;" and away she flew, with gay hilarity; smiling at the image of William in days past, with a bunch of fruit and leaves from a cherry tree, flourishing in his waistcoat breast, because Lady Catherine's caprice had willed them there.

Honoria's toilet was soon made. A gown and wrapping cloak of transparent muslin, and a large gipsy hat of lighter materials, tied down with a rose-coloured handkerchief, formed the basis of her dress; its only decorations were some knots of the same coloured riband, glowing among the dark curls of her hair, as grape-clusters through vine-leaves.

This hooded cloak, flying picturesquely back, and displaying her figure; the

careless grace with which she wore her becoming hat; the hat itself, and the darkly-bright face looking out from its shadow, with all its panoply of glittering smiles, laughing eye-beams, and glows of colour, were too characteristic not to strike every one as she entered.

"My Honor! you are perfect!" exclaimed the warm-hearted Jane.

"Not amiss, for one of your inconsequent sex!" observed William, glancing at the lovely gipsy, with an attempt at *no* admiration.

Major Stanhope's remark was conveyed in a whisper to the beloved of his heart! Whatever that was, it called the rosy blood to the cheek of his fair mistress, who calling him flatterer, betook herself to fresh raptures about her friend.

Honorina was obliged to cry for quarter, or beg, that admiration might be transferred from herself, to her taste exercised upon others; for at that moment came in Miss Mulcaster, dressed with fashion, yet simplicity; — in stole Henrietta, like a Pastora: — in fluttered Sophy, with

feathers flying, frills floating, colours blending. Honoria, while presiding at Sophia Mulcaster's toilet, had given her dress the only laws its wearer could endure; and had happily contrived to combine the young lady's plaid silk spencer, with an Amazonian head-dress then in vogue, so as to produce something of a military effect. Any lady who wishes to know the precise nature of the various head-gears then worn, may enlighten herself by consulting the prints in her aunt's pocketbook for the year 1797. She will there find that "Valenciennes helmets, telegraph bonnets, and gipsies' hats," were all the mode.

William lifted up his hands and eyes at Sophia's entrance. — "Match that girl for address! — (I don't mean a pun, Stanhope, so you may save your laugh) — tartan ribands, that every fool may find his favourite colour amongst them; and a helmet, with green feathers, by way of complimenting the whole 150th regiment! Then there's demure Henny, pretending the clerical already, determined that

her saint of Trinity shall only hear of her in pastoral straw and primroses. Isabella, too, walking under clouds of lace and lawn, like the moon in a mist, because — (he hesitated and glanced archly) — because she loves hiding.”

Miss Mulcaster was seen to blush and look distressed, while *endeavouring to discover* that she could not throw back her long veil.

“Your audacious criticism can have nothing to say against the gipsies,” questioned Stanhope, looking admiringly, though involuntarily, towards Jane, who was dressed much in Honoria’s fashion.

“O, nothing to signify,” was William’s careless answer; “except that the one mars the other. When Jane is going through the wind in your tandem, with her hair well blown out, and her hat well blown off, and her extravagant colour well blown in,” (Stanhope’s indignant clamours against such heresy in vain broke upon William’s *tirade*, — he went on as if no one had spoken;) “why, then, she may look handsome enough in

the whirl by, as a mere masquerader ; but your real gipsy must be looked for in Miss O'Hara. Now pr'ythee, Stanhope, be not so very silly and sentimental, as to keep thinking Jane is an angel, therefore, worth all the Egyptian tribe put together !”

“ You have no business with my thoughts, Mulcaster,” returned Stanhope, with his old laugh at William’s exact guess. “ After all, Miss O’Hara is only our *beau ideal* of a gipsy.”

“ Bravo, Major ! a compliment *exquis* ! — as good as if I had said it myself. — You really deserve something better than a wife with red hair !”

“ Red hair !” repeated Jane in a panic. “ Red hair !” echoed every other person.

“ Why, you all know,” he resumed composedly, “ that Mrs. Shafto would go to death upon the assertion. For my own poor part, I do think her locks just now in the sun look awfully suspicious. Of course, Stanhope, you are ready to outswear Mrs. Shafto, and tell us, such locks

' Are from the golden mines on high,

Up in the blue hills of the sky: —'

that they are like woods in Autumn, stained glass at sunset, nuts just ripened, &c. &c. &c. You see I don't consort with poets for nothing. But, to return to my subject. — My opinion upon hair is decisive, — for I study differences no other mortal takes the pains to observe; for instance, — I declare Miss O'Hara's hair is of a different blackness from that of the Ladies Lumley; theirs is coal black — jet black — shadeless — grim — dreadful! Hers has a sort of blue bloom with its gloss, like my raven's feathers; a kind of prismatic —"

"O, Mr. Mulcaster, if you tell me I have a black and blue head, what a monster do you make of me!" interrupted Honoria.

Further lively nonsense was broken off by the appearance of the Dean. He came to say that both the carriage and himself were ready.

"You going, papa!" "You going, dear sir!" was repeated by every voice

with tones of pleasure and surprise. Yes, he was actually going. He concluded that the officers would only have their own immediate acquaintance and neighbours at their breakfast; it would be a social little meeting, not a field of public gambling; — Colonel Mason had pressed for his company; and he thought now, that as Jane was situated, he ought to appear with her at the first large assembly she went into, after her engagement with Major Stanhope was openly proclaimed.

Some alteration of previous arrangements followed this otherwise acceptable proposal. Jane was to go with her father, instead of her lover, to the ground; but, if her heart were quite set upon having her lover break her neck, instead of her heart, her father would give her leave to be entreated afterwards into leaving the stand, and taking a drive with him round the course. Sophia gladly exchanged her place, in a close coach, for Jane's vacant one beside the disappointed Major.

This change of plan was, in fact, too

flattering, as well as proper, not to be submitted to with a tolerably good grace ; and Stanhope, anxious to set his fair betrothed an amiable example of obedience, acquiesced immediately ; though a speaking glance at Jane told her what the virtue cost him.

Plans and places thus adjusted, away the party drove to the Fell.

As they bowled over the grassy cross road leading to the scene of action, they could see the tents and colours glittering on the high ground of the race-course ; crowds of pedestrians and horsemen were gathering round the starting-post ; and carriages of different sorts coming swiftly in different directions. The lively strains of martial music were heard rousing the echoes of the hills, mixed with the shrill voice of a Punch, the rattles of jugglers and showmen, and all the other anomalous sounds of a miniature Epsom.

The Dean was consternated, and would fain have turned back ; but hands were clasped, and voices raised, and kisses rained upon his hands, by all the syrens

in the coach with him ; so he was fairly obliged to proceed. William, riding by their side for a few minutes, was one of the most earnest persuaders. He now pointed to Mr. Chaplin's distant white house, perched on the hill, with its long flying ends of thin pilasters : — “ Behold where riches literally make wings to themselves ! ” he exclaimed ; the next moment he drew away, to let a remarkably high phaeton pass. It was drawn by four spirited blood horses ; and driven, not by Lord Brinkbourn, as William at first fancied, from the showy appearance of the carriage itself, and the servants riding after it, but by a dandy of that day, evidently just out of his teens ; with a narrow-brimmed, steeple-crowned hat, just resting on the top of his cropped head, and a neckcloth swallowing all the lower part of his face up to his nose. William, in conscious manliness of look and dress, looked after the foolish coxcomb with a supercilious smile ; but other objects claimed his attention.

As the Dean's heavy coach rolled towards the barrier of the course (for the officers had fenced off a part of the Fell), it was checked in its advance by the stopping of two coroneted carriages just before them. At that moment William again rode up to the side of his father's coach ; pulling in his horse with a hand answering to the sudden paleness of his cheek, he hurried out, — "Look your best, Jane, — out-bloom the other bride elect. I see the Hexham and Bowes liveries just before us. I don't think I *can* cut her, after all." So saying, he gave the spur to his hunter, and with all the grace of a most elegant and perfectly made figure, (though no longer with an air at once gay and disdainful,) he galloped up to one of the splendid equipages.

His sister Jane looked out after him : "Poor dear William !" she cried, as after short observation, she drew in her head again, her eyes glistening : "I saw his hand shake as he laid it on the side of their carriage ; he was as pale as death. I wonder how she looked ! I could only

see her fantastic heap of lilac feathers, for Lady Hexham's great head. If she did not die on the spot with shame, she deserves —"

"Hanging," interrupted the Dean. "Thou shalt sit upon the bench, my child! Another Daniel! William shows himself so utterly undone, so incapable of enjoying any sort of pleasure, that of course Lady Catherine must see she is a monster of perfidy, for having prudently weighed the heir to a dukedom, with high character, though in a quizzical person, (is not that the right epithet?) against a mighty handsome boy of nineteen without rank or present estate; one moreover that had most likely never allowed the matter-of-fact word, marriage, a place in his love making. When her pretty Ladyship accepted Lord Brinkbourn; it is obvious she must have been quite unprepared for the sight of such a dismal wreck as my poor dismasted, and dismantled William now presents."

"Now, dear papa!" supplicated Jane, "were you not running down Lady Ca-

therine just now, to Miss O'Hara; why are you so inconsistent?"

"Because, my child," returned the Dean, with immediate seriousness, "I would by ridicule, now and then, teach you and William to moderate your likings and dislikings; and when you are denouncing the conduct of another, teach you to think that some of the evil may originate in yourselves. I am still ready to censure Lady Catherine for a free coquetry which dishonours female delicacy; and for an unworthy dissimulation of her different wishes or prospects, at a time when they must have been obvious to herself, and when a hint of them, or any retiring conduct on her part, would have warned my son not to proceed in his public and private attentions to her. She *might* have spared him a mortification; but I really cannot accuse her of murdering one wink of his sleep."

Jane was humbly and affectionately owning her sense of his justice when she caught the distant sound of her lover's voice, as he was replying in his em-

barrassed way to some congratulating friends.

"O that dear laugh!" she whispered to Honoria: "do you remember all my treasons against it when I first knew him? how I love it now!"

"I condole with you then, my child," resumed the Dean, whom no whisper escaped, "it is fast disappearing; by the time your Major has got rid of his modesty, (and your preference has made a wonderful change in his notion of himself,) the laugh will go."

What further the worthy dignitary would have said on this subject is lost to knowledge, for the carriage was now passing under a temporary arch, prettily decorated with laurels and military emblems. Colonel Mason, with gorget and teeth glittering, sat on horseback, bowing and welcoming the different parties as they passed.

William and Major Stanhope were at the foot of the stand to hand the ladies out of the coach, and take them up to

Lady Henderson who was to be supposed their chaperon.

The raised complexion, and resolute look of the former, told the history of his transit past the Hexham landau. "Not a tear, Jane," he whispered to his favourite sister as he grasped her hand. "Not one penitent or humbled look! — nothing but heartless levity. I was a fool, — a wretched fool! — well — it was her last triumph, I can tell her. Mark me to-day! — there — go your ways."

Jane hastened to get between her father and lover, with whom she was to ascend the stand; while her brother assuming his ordinary tone, called out to Honoria, who was gaily skimming after them, "Stop, stop, Miss O'Hara; take my arm; Isabella will chaperon Henny; and Sophy, you see, has got her string of puppies already. There, — now all's right; move on."

William was still wound up to the heroic; and he kept on, jesting gaily, as they slowly followed those before them up the wooden staircase.

“Jane does look lovely, does she not?” he asked, while his sister’s blushing, beaming face was seen by snatches, as she turned with more than her usual animated eagerness of talk, alternately from her father to her lover; “and Stanhope is worth all the lords on the ground; I’m glad he’s such a good-looking fellow.” Honoria guessed what other couple were in his thoughts. “And I beg you’ll look your best, Miss O’Hara, for I mean to bestow your pretty little hand, in the dance at least, upon my friend Mr. Peter Gubbins; you know you never will like poor Fitz Arthur, so I am not doing mischief there; therefore look as pretty as your shoe, or woe betide you! I wonder if Lord Francis is up there — ten to one if he comes after all, spite of his raptures about you and the sheep; he is such a strange animal! However, I am positive you are his *fate*. Your sentimentalists always choose gay things like you, that put one ever in mind of sunshine and the butterfly.”

Honoria rallied him on his indifferent

compliment; but her heart was beating with girlish anticipation of Lord Francis's introduction.

When they reached the door-way at the top of the stairs, it was for a while completely blocked up, so much company having been attracted from the neighbouring counties by the popularity of Colonel Mason and the races themselves. She heard, however, the voice of Lady Haverford within, joyously greeting those of their party already on the platform, and saying numberless graceful nothings, with engaging earnestness.

In a few moments she was herself on the stand, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, though all in a glow and a tremor.

Lady Haverford sprang forward,—

“And Miss O'Hara!—dressed in summer clouds. What is your dress, my dear creature?—O that cloak! its a thing to go wild about: I never saw any thing half so pretty! You are absolutely a vision in the sky. But that face!—unless one had just such a face to look out with,

it would be quite useless to mount up there."

Did Mrs. Shafto hear aright? Was Miss O'Hara on such terms with Lady Haverford, the charming Lady Haverford, the fashionable Lady Haverford, the first cousin of the first British statesman! Did Lady Haverford (fashion's own oracle) pronounce a large, hooded wrapping cloak, *without lace*, perfect in elegance! Mrs. Shafto looked in dismay at her daughters' scarf cloaks, of pea-green satin, trimmed with black lace a foot deep. Better could so devoted a mother brook the enthusiastic praise given to the odiously brilliant face, than this decisive approbation of a self-fancied garment. Mr. Mulcaster became absolutely radiant with exultation: in defiance of Honoria's confusion, he seconded Lady Haverford's raptures about the "little becoming tie of rose-colour, which just relieved the delightful plainness of the wrap;" doing it with much of the unction, though none of the skill of a connoisseur.

Quite confounded, by what appeared to her such public, therefore distressing encomium, Honoria flew in utter confusion to the Dean's vacant arm, beseeching him to shelter her from general raillery. But Lady Haverford was not allowed time to pursue the fugitive: she was re-absorbed on the instant, by the small constellation of *haut-ton*, out of which she had shot for a moment to utter a voluble chime of cordial greetings and congratulations to the party from St. Cuthberts.

Honoria's troubled vision now began to clear; and she saw on the stand only the congregated stars of fashion just mentioned, (all belonging to the Hexham party,) Lady Henderson, Lord Wearmouth, the family from Shafto Place, and such of the officers as chose to do the honours of their little platform.

Her heart ceased its tumultuous beatings: she observed William Mulcaster pausing for an instant; then saw him dauntlessly advance into the Hexham circle. After graceful notice of all he knew there, he carelessly asked Lady

Haverford where Lord Francis Fitz James was.

“On some primrose bank, I dare say, at Ravenshaw,” returned the Viscountess, smiling, though interrupted in a tide of lively talk, “worshipping a certain little black slipper, the history of which you know. Lord Francis would not come within ear-shot of betting, for all Christendom; but he promised to come to the breakfast, after which I intend he shall dance—” “With her of the slipper, doubtless,” replied William, drawing close up to the object of his strongest aversion.

“Good morning, Mrs. Shafto! — a glorious day! — are your fair offspring here? O, I see!” (bowing round.) “Which of you ladies have lost a shoe?” looking down at at their long spiked feet. All protested against having suffered such loss. “I’m sorry to hear that; for there has been a slipper lost, and found, which is likely to produce great revolutions — achieve wondrous victories! — The foot to which it belongs will most indubitably carry off a hand full of bays, I can tell you; not

bay horses, Miss Shafto," (seeing that lady obliquely glancing at Mr. Tudor below, dismounting from a steed of that colour,) "poet's bays, I mean."

Mrs. Shafto put herself forward with her most insinuating aspect, as she saw Lady Haverford's eyes smilingly directed from her own party towards her and Mr. Mulcaster. Mrs. Shafto was merely on the most distant visiting terms with the haughty Hexham family; that is, she called at Hexham Castle, where she was never let in; and Lady Hexham returned the civility at Shafto Place, where she never got out: poor Mrs. Shafto therefore was always cheated with paper currency instead of gold. She now brightened in the hope of attracting a little distinguishing notice from their goddess, Lady Haverford, with whom too, she was but on curtsying terms of acquaintance; and looking most beseechingly in her direction, she entreated Mr. Mulcaster would enlighten her on the affair of the slipper.

Her gay Ladyship was just then breaking away from one of her detainers; and urged by William, incited too by her own

enjoyment of animated narration, with all the ease of birth and beauty, gave the little tale of Lord Francis Fitz James's sight of Honoria, and subsequent prize of her slipper ; adding to it a more confident assertion of his heart's instant surrender to "the very prettiest of small feet" than even William would have hazarded.

No sooner was this done, than at some familiar voice, she flew to the front of the stand, below which half a dozen titled equestrians were insisting upon her betting gloves with them.

Mrs. Shafto had listened to this detail with well-acted pleasure ; since amused she knew she ought to be : but a lord in waiting, with a blister upon his back, is lying on roses, in comparison. The ruthless William increased her secret torments, by adding that his friend Mr. Peter Gubbins would be at the *déjeûné* after the race, when he would try hard to present him to her. Mrs. Shafto was obliged beyond measure : she writhed and repeated various laudatory remarks upon his friend's poems, which her daughters

had *not* made that very morning; owning herself, however, (with masterly regard to former unlucky observations,) still a plain prose woman, though sure to like any friend of Mr. Mulcaster's.

Fully bent upon ingratiating herself, she chose the mode of compliment and condolence, and said flatteringly, "We heard yesterday of a marriage in prospect, which I hope we may congratulate you upon, for your very charming sister, Miss Jane?"

"Thank you! thank you, Mrs. Shafto; getting a sister off, as they call it, is a great achievement these anti-marrying days. I shall be truly glad when I can return the compliment for one of your five fair daughters." This was indeed too inhuman, and well deserved Mrs. Shafto's master stroke in reply.

"I heard of another alliance too," she added, feigning to lower her voice, — "so brilliant, and so suitable! — I should really be delighted at its taking place, were I not really sorry for a gentleman said to be —" William broke in upon her pity

with an under tone. "That is being far too tenderhearted, my good madam, I'll take upon me to say. I am for all young ladies taking the first great catch that offers : if they want to be married, they need make no ceremony of jilting boys, or younger brothers. Those sort of animals themselves, think of nothing but living from day to day on a flirtation. A man must be a thorough steady goer indeed, before he puts the yoke round his own neck, and runs his head into matrimony."

"That shot told wickedly two ways," whispered Major Stanhope, as he was passing, on some embassy of Jane's. William meant it should ; and leaving *the Shafto*, he went up again to Lady Hexham, with a well-studied, well-spoken compliment, upon the rank and character of her future son-in-law.

Lady Catherine's disturbed complexion and extravagant peals of laughter, while uttering the stupidest common-places to one of her companions, proved that his answer to Mrs. Shafto had reached her ear ; she was evidently bitterly mortified,

for she avoided his eye, and kept tearing a large bouquet to pieces, with obvious irritation.

The relentless William, much to his father's amusement, stood calmly amongst the set, alternately addressing Lady Hexham and Lord Brinkbourn with that perfect air of the gentleman, which he could wear at will.

"That boy of mine will not be ill-flavoured when time has mellowed him a little ;" observed the Dean to Honoria: "at present, he is what your beer-drinkers would call *hard and heady*: but I think it is only real malignity that he hates so intemperately; offended self has not very much to do with it."

Honoria heartily assented to the partial parent's remark; for she hourly liked her friend's brother more and more. Yet she could not forbear accusing him of purposely bringing his grace of person and glow of complexion into comparison with the rueful wanness of Lord Brinkbourn's long compressed shape, and the extraordinary uncouthness of his embar-

passed movements. And when after a long stay amongst those people, he returned to his own party, she whispered a censure upon his merciless resentment.

“Well! it is quite done now,” he replied, in the same under tone, and with much good feeling. “I have seen for myself:—I am quite and completely cured. If there had been but the shadow of a worthy feeling in her face, — I’ll put aside a tender one, — I could not have stood it: but now I know it must have been all her own doing, — her own free choice — and much good may do her with her pasteboard husband!” — “Now, Lady Haverford,” he exclaimed aloud, “whose horse do you patronize? Will you bet against me? I’ll take any side you choose to say won’t win, — provided you’ll let the stake be hands, not gloves.”

Lady Haverford *went off*, as she called it, in fits of laughter at this free sally: every other person smiled; and Mrs. Shafto began to think the very ground was slipping from under her feet, for

Lady Catherine had jilted Mr. Mulcaster, and Mr. Mulcaster was unconcernedly flirting with Lady Haverford.

At this moment Colonel Mason rode up to the stand with the air of a Life Guardsman about to station himself under the arch of the Horse Guards.

“In a few minutes the horses will be off!”

At this important intelligence all was bustle. The Marquis of Brinkbourn's phaeton waited for Lady Catherine; Major Stanhope's tandem for Jane Mulcaster; William lamented to the Misses Shafto that he had not a pillion in his pocket, that he might do the office of a knight, and succour beauty in distress.

Lady Haverford was swept away in the stream, ineffectually attempting to reach Honoria: five or six young ladies were in her train, each of whom she had good-naturedly proposed to drive in Lord Wearmouth's curricule: not one of them, after all, had the luck to get taken by her.

As the volatile Viscountess was descending the stairs, Sir Everard Fitz Ar-

thur was just alighting from his chariot : — he was in the middle of as circumstantial an apology to one of the subalterns for Mrs. Fothergill's non-appearance, as though he believed the youth's happiness depended upon the smiles of his crippled relative ; when her lively ladyship uttering a scream of pleasure, reminded him that they had not met during eight years, and insisted upon his letting her have the delight of driving him round the course, and hearing all about her old friend, his son Delaval, whom she was dying to see.

Sir Everard could not resist any request asked in his son's name. Hardly aware of what he was doing, he yielded to her quick impulse, and to the quicker action of her inviting hand, he got into the curricule, whilst assuring her his son Delaval was coming with Thomas to see the sport.

All elate with real pleasure, away Lady Haverford whirled, calling out with sudden penitence, as she looked back on the six young ladies, with each her attendant

officer, "You poor girls! I quite forgot you all!"

The six deserted ones, among whom were two of the Misses Mulcaster, returned to the platform. Other parties were then ascending, amongst which Honoria beheld Delaval Fitz Arthur. He had encountered Mr. Mulcaster, who being close by Lord Brinkbourn's phaeton, had told him in an audible whisper that he would find his sisters and Miss O'Hara in the stand, looking like so many angels.

Fitz Arthur in his present state of mind, and after such an absence, could not deny himself the poor gratification of just looking at Honoria—just exchanging a word with her ere he accompanied his little brother to the starting post. But no sooner had he caught a glimpse of her bright face, than he decided that it would be much safer for Thomas to see the horses run from their present station, than to ride his pony through the throng and press of horsemen near the rival candidates. Placing

Thomas, therefore, as advantageously as possible, he hurried through the buzzing crowd towards Honoria.

The animation of his entrance struck her powerfully: she could not help thinking he was really handsome, after all her obstinate resolves to think him otherwise. Her dark eyes immediately lighted up with welcome, while half-extending her hand: but instantly remembering her vicinity to Mrs. Shafto, she checked herself, and merely made way for him to press in, by her side.

Fitz Arthur was even more gratified by the impulse being checked, than by the evident impulse itself: it seemed to argue a certain consciousness. There was embarrassment for the moment on her cheek and in her eye: it emboldened him to take that yet seizable hand, and tremblingly to press it, with an expression which he had never before ventured to give to any former pressure of that soft, warm hand.

Honoria let the change pass unobserved. She was so glad to see him

again ! he knew so well how he stood in her opinion ! — she had such a thorough esteem, regard, gratitude, friendship for him ! he had been so long away ! it would be absolute prudery to draw back, merely because he had given her hand too cordial a squeeze ! and then she had so much to tell him ! — for was she not in the habit of telling Fitz Arthur every thing that pained, pleased, or puzzled her ?

Well did common phrases term friendship the cordial of life : — it was certainly no bad substitute for the intoxicating draught of love. That enchanted cup, however, she had not yet tasted, she was well convinced. If she fancied it might be held to her lips hereafter by Lord Francis Fitz James, it cannot be doubted that the fancy was not displeasing. Yet was there something at the bottom of Honoria's heart which she was afraid to fathom : it seemed to say she felt more inclined for the proud triumph of having Lord Francis Fitz James to refuse, than for the gentle wish of lov-

ing him in return. She would have attributed this guilty feeling to sheer, pitiful vanity, had not the jaundiced eyes of Mrs. Shafto looked remarks and roused emotions, which declared pride and self-estimation to be Honoria's besetting sins.

As she recalled all that Mr. Mulcaster had told her of Lord Francis's avowed admiration of her, and as she indignantly remembered the many insults of Mrs. Shafto on the subject of Fitz Arthur, future victory rose to her view: she then suffered her spirits to take their freest course.

She had to tell Fitz Arthur of her visit to Ravenshaw; of her new acquaintance Lady Haverford; and as she had long ceased to make a secret to him of her little chagrins from the disagreement of her present home with her natural tastes and earlier habits, she described the first appearance of Lord Wearmonth at the Rectory, with its ridiculous distress to herself, in her gayest manner.

The charm, the playfulness of Hono-

ria's countenance whenever she narrated any thing amusing, was inexpressibly delightful. She delivered herself so entirely up to her subject ; was so bewitchingly careless of her own effect meanwhile, that she enchanted as children do, absolutely without consciousness of doing so. Afterwards indeed, she woke up to the effect she had produced ; and sometimes regretted it.

Now as if to welcome her friend back, she was all animation ; she would hear all that had occurred to him while absent ; and Fitz Arthur contrived to find some incidents to tell that were in harmony with her humour and a race-course. Admiration and compliment now buzzed about Honoria, and she heard them not. Many a young horseman's eyes below, lost the sight of the race, by gazing up at her bright and bewildering countenance. Many a bet was taken and offered unwittingly, from the better's ear being fascinated by the varied music of her voice. She smiled, and trifled, and made herself only too enchanting to him who sat drink-

ing in every word she uttered, without suffering her extravagant gaiety to be frowned down by Mrs. Shafto's ejaculations of, "What a sad noise! my poor head! how people talk!"

Honorina was culpably eager to show Mrs. Shafto that she held the sceptre of Delaval Fitz Arthur's heart: that point it was now necessary should be made manifest, since Mrs. Shafto doubted it; after which, Honorina would have the decided triumph of withdrawing from his attentions. She forgot that Fitz Arthur would thus have a right to reproach her for encouraging the display of his affection, and then rejecting it; she forgot that she was at this moment awakening hopes, or rather turning hopes into expectations, which she never intended to realize. Alas, Honorina was but eighteen; and she lived with a most active heart in bosom solitude; averse to making little confidences, (which so often enlighten us upon our own inclinations and failings,) and having no discerning mother's eye to watch over her erring feelings and weed them out as they sprang up.

Fitz Arthur, listened to, questioned, talked to with apparent interest, detaining Honoria's attention from the very object of her coming there, (for she never once looked towards the running horses,) grew giddy with hope, and but for the closeness and numbers of the thronging heads around them, must have given breath to his agitated transport.

As it was, his hitherto smothered passion burnt not only on his cheek and in his eyes, but in the touch of his hand, as Honoria's thrillingly rested in his, while he assisted her to move over a bench into a freer space; he was at that moment ardently expressing something like envy of Major Stanhope's happiness, — so loving! so beloved! Honoria, trembling to the contradictory glow and shiver of the hand assisting her, felt panic-struck, — conscience-struck.

Would it not be barbarous to mislead him, as perhaps she was doing? — but how very agreeable and interesting he had been, that half hour! yet that should not excuse her to herself, for remaining near him. With laudable resolution, therefore,

she all at once declared she was tired of staring about.

Fitz Arthur fondly hoped it was Mrs. Shafto's petrific eye, which had caused this hasty movement; the embarrassed air of Honoria strengthened the flattering idea, for she had blushed as she met his ardent gaze. At that instant he would not have exchanged situations with the happiest lover on the ground.

He now saw her flit to the side of Miss Mulcaster, who was talking with Lord Wearmouth. As His Lordship immediately addressed her as an acquaintance, Mrs. Shafto actually turning green with vexation, called to Fitz Arthur, and in a low tone begged "he would tell her, (she supposed he was in the secret,) how it came about that Miss O'Hara knew Lord Wearmouth, and knew Lady Haverford? Certainly some persons had a most extraordinary knack of pushing themselves into society where they had no pretensions to come! She only hoped Lady Haverford and Lord Francis Fitz James had not laid a plot of diverting

themselves by seeing how much of a poor young woman's head they could turn, by their caricatured admiration."

Fitz Arthur in alarm, questioned what Mrs. Shafto meant; for the half-conscious Honoria had not spoken of Lord Francis. A garbled explanation followed. Mrs. Shafto retailed as much as she liked, and in the way she liked, of what Lady Haverford had narrated; intending to convince Fitz Arthur that he was degradingly devoting himself to a girl, either foolishly vain, or cunningly ambitious. But as Mrs. Shafto understood that Honoria had not yet been in society with the worshipper of her slipper, Fitz Arthur gathered that the admiration was solely on Lord Francis's side; and well did he remember that lady's pernicious insinuations against the woman he loved, to his artless father. He was told that Honoria had heard this admiration repeated to her; that she now knew who Lord Francis was, (her champion of the shamrock,) he could not doubt; yet she had afterwards smiled upon her first ad-

mirer, more bewitchingly than she had ever hitherto done ; and she had been talking with delicacy and feeling of Lady Catherine Eustace's cruel coquetry. She could not then be capable of playing with any heart from any motive.

An humbler man than Delaval Fitz Arthur, if such could be found, would have gathered sweet auguries from these considerations. They did indeed allay the sudden pang of apprehension ; but fear had too painfully touched his hopes, for confidence to remain. He ventured not to seek her again ; but replacing himself beside his little brother, continued standing with altered looks, near the party most unpleasant to him.

The last race was just over, and every body was now in movement for the breakfast. Fitz Arthur could not escape from offering to take charge of one of the Misses Shafto ; (the eldest had unawares accepted the pompously presented arm of Mr. Tudor,) and marshalling according to the established laws of precedence, the different parties of nobility and com-

moners, descended from the stand, trooping to the gay marquées pitched for the collation and the dance.

By a gallant fancy of Colonel Mason's, the brides elect had one marquée appointed for themselves and their especial friends. He was now seen, hat in hand, going from Lady Catherine in the phaeton, to Jane Mulcaster in the tandem, imparting this gallant arrangement, and beseeching them to issue their commands on the subject of invitation.

The enchanted Jane instantly named himself as the first of her party;—adding, “and *all* my friends.” Colonel Mason was left to ask who were *not* Jane Mulcaster's friends:—if grateful hearts among the poor towards her, and affectionate ones in those of her own rank, entitled persons to be so named.

Lady Catherine Eustace confined her party entirely to the select set who had grouped round her on the platform of the stand.

The second of May being the anniversary of a battle in which the 150th

regiment had distinguished itself while in India, not only every officer and private had laurel in his cap or breast, but the tents were liberally adorned with it. That into which the chosen groups now entered, was turned into a bower, by a perfect lining of hot-house plants, ascending on stages to its very top, and forming a fragrant circle round its linen walls. Every delicacy to gratify appetite was profusely spread over the board. Round this, the hastily collected persons seated themselves, with the gay tumult of hurry and pleasure, common on such occasions. For some time little else was heard amongst the clattering of silver, and china, and military trappings, except challenges to drink wine, invitations to take ice, &c. &c. Honoria looked round to see who were in the tent, who were left out. There were neither the Shafto family, nor the Fitz Arthur's, nor William Mulcaster, nor Lady Haverford. Where was Lord Francis Fitz James? if he were indeed come, he must be in the large tent.

Honorina soon began to wonder (in spite of two attendant young officers waiting on her smiles,) when the people would have done eating and drinking. She wondered, too, how her friend Jane could bear to be so long in such a small tent, with such an overpowering smell of flowers and wine. But Jane was seated next to Stanhope, whose looks were full of more than a lover's pride ; real, deep, true, devoted affection. — She was by his side, and where else would she be ?

As Honorina's glance rested on her, she could not help thinking how inferior was the air of mere fashion, to that look of nobility which springs from truth and graciousness in the character. How far superior was the noble Jane, sitting in her glowing and plenteous beauty, with honour and honesty stamped upon her brow, — to the elegantly pretty Lady Catherine, evidently as mutable, cold, and empty, as the mists which her fantastic, yet graceful movements, seemed intended to imitate !

Luckily, Lady Catherine was neither

so happy, nor in such good-humour, as the other bride elect. Lord Brinkbourn was sitting close up by her; looking, at times, like a man in a vice; at other times, as if seized by a fit of St. Vitus's dance, breaking cups and glasses in his nervous attempts at helping the ladies round him.

Lady Catherine's rank privileged her in first making a movement to leave the table. She arose; and every one rose after her; preparing to flock to the larger tent.

William Mulcaster appeared at the entrance of the *marquée*, calling out that they had cleared away the tables in their dining-place, and were beginning dancing: — that is, Lady Haverford, and Colonel Mason, were actually going to dance a minuet together.

At this intimation, every one hurried out, to witness an exhibition even then rarely seen beyond St. James's. "Colonel Mason is the best sight on the ground," pursued William, as he strode along,

dragging Honoria on his arm with brotherly familiarity. "He's like a man covered with orders; every lady insisting upon his wearing her flower. So he has a bouquet in every button-hole: a laurel sprig at the top of the ladder though! — If his pockets are but well crammed with ladies' fans, and smelling-bottles, and handkerchiefs, he'll make a grand appearance!"

They were by this time in the large tent, with the pair of popular exhibitors, and close to Miss Matilda Shafto, whom lucky chance had presented to Mr. Pemberton as a talking-stock.

A tongue that seldom could remain inactive, governed by a shrewd head, which allowed only rations of nonsense to young ladies, made Mr. Pemberton partial to listeners; and Miss Matilda Shafto, prompted by a look from her mother, listened, with a wide fixed smile, to the frothy bon mots of the ministerial man, instead of enjoying the real comic of the sight before them. Mrs. Shafto instantly had some thoughts of detaining

her from a visit she was going to make in Yorkshire.

With genuine taste for the ridiculous, Honoria having glimpsed Colonel Mason's figure, absurdly stuck over with flowers, as Mr. Mulcaster had described, insinuated herself into a front rank of the surrounding circle ; receiving, at the moment, a bewitching smile from Lady Haverford. Lady Haverford, all sportiveness and elegance, was going through her part of the performance with a freshness of vivacity absolutely bewitching ; evidently unconscious of her own inimitable grace, while considering the whole matter as a jest, played off to please her partner, and amuse her own set.

He, meanwhile, with the visage of a man solving a problem, and the air of a ramrod, was marching and counter-marching in stately solemnity ; sliding along and across, with eyes left, eyes right, obedient to the awful drilling of times long past, under the command of his *dieu de danse* ! Now bowing his powdered head, slowly and profoundly ;

now rearing it, with gallant spriteness, in the very face of his fair antagonist.

Honorina was at once enchanted and entertained. Lady Haverford's gliding motion realized all her visions of an ærial being, and she warmly re-echoed Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's audible admiration, as he stood beside her, after a hasty recognition of more than usual cordiality.

In the press near them, were Lord Brinkbourn and his bride elect; Mr. Mulcaster carelessly grouped with them. When the dance was over, she saw William turn negligently away, exclaiming, as his arm brushed Lady Catherine: "I beg Your Ladyship ten thousand pardons! I really did not see you." — William, — who had hitherto been supposed to see nothing but her! — Lady Catherine obviously felt the sting of this apology, for she changed colour, and bit her lips: — yet she followed William's figure with her eyes.

When country dances were forming, the young man came up to his father. "What are you thinking of, sir?" he asked cheerfully.

“I am thinking, William, what moral difference there is between an asserted lie, and an acted lie. What do you think there is?”

“None at all, I should suppose!” was the instant answer.

“A pleasant opinion for you at present,” returned the Dean dryly. “I wish you joy of the character you have just contrived to fasten upon yourself: that of the most hardened, heartless coxcomb, that ever forced poor lady into the arms of another man.”

William comprehended his meaning, and could not forbear a glance of triumphant pleasure, as he sprang away, without further comment. He was caught in his flight by one of the officers, who looking towards Lady Catherine’s mortified yet admiring countenance, said in a low tone, “If I’m not mistaken, you may have a capital revenge six months at furthest:—there’s nothing like piquing a woman;—will you try for it?”

“Am I a demon?” William asked

indignantly ; then, with affected indifference : "Faith, I've no fancy for thorns in my nightcap." This was carelessly said, and neither of the speakers meant to be heard beyond themselves. But both questions and answers had reached the quick ear of the father ; and his heart swelled with grateful acknowledgment to the God who had evidently blessed his pious endeavours at giving right principles to his son.

He now turned to meet his daughter Sophia, who was hastening with a disordered mien towards her sister and Honoria. Not a single red or blue coat was with her ! All were swarming round the sparkling path of Lady Haverford, who was formed to dazzle and delight in crowded assemblies. Her exuberant spirits awakened by the whim of dancing an obsolete dance with a man old enough to be her father, were exerting themselves with that fascinating inattention to common forms, (yet with nice tact of what man's delicacy exacts from delicate woman,) which gives the highly born, their mastery in the strife of charming.

Her musical laugh, for so it might almost be called, was perpetually heard, breaking in upon her own rapid and amusing talk; as rallying her love of popularity with as much gaiety as frankness, she was lamenting the impossibility of running off with Colonel Mason and Sir Everard Fitz Arthur at the same moment.

Sophia Mulcaster's raised complexion showed that her vulnerable point was touched. "I cry you mercy, Sophy!" said the Dean, affectedly lowering his voice, and looking significantly at her vexed countenance. "I took you for a Miss Shafto. Must I help you to hue and cry your lost men! or will you accept of William and me? — We are creditable-looking persons enough; and folks may not know we are your relations."

Sophy would have passed him with a petulant "sir — sir!" but her father fairly grasped her wrist, and turned her back into the circle.

"Recollect yourself, my child!" he said; then after a few moments' pause:

“ I am going to slip out of this gay scene : do you choose to go with me, or to remain ? ”

Sophia's eyes actually brimmed with tears ; but she staid where she was ; and did not sullenly refuse her hand to one of her faithless followers, when he came to solicit it for the first two dances.

As the sets were forming, Lady Haverford flitted to and fro with half the population of the tent after her, giving her little commissions to one, her smile to another : seeking choice partners for all the young ladies round ; and pledging her own hand, by way of bribe, irredeemably to more officers and squires than she could dance with during a week.

Even Honoria was made to feel the potency of rank and fashion, when unblazoned beauty contends with them. But such conviction only left a wholesome, not bitter lesson in her mind. She dwelt longer, and less agreeably on the developed habits of the fascinating character before her : for Lady Haverford had more than once attempted to make

good her threat of possessing herself entirely of Miss O'Hara's society, and as often had been torn away by different calls upon her services and her notice.

Lady Haverford's obvious passion for popularity was far too kindly for vanity ; yet it diminished Honoria's wish to know her more intimately. Lady Haverford, equally anxious to please every body, equally open to the solicitations or murmurs of friends and acquaintance, was not a being to wed the heart to. She was a luxuriant tree too crowded with blossoms ever to ripen into sound fruit : she was a summer wind bringing sweets and wafting them away, — a bright cloud in the blue sky, melting as the eye was ascertaining it ! her hand grasped too much to retain anything : and Honoria turned from this fair phantom of charm and caressing, to the reality of genuine goodness, thoroughgoing affection, and efficient benevolence, in the person of Jane Mulcaster.

It is needless to say with what deep, true feeling, she inwardly pledged her

own warm heart to that well-deserving friend: to that friend, who had come from crowds of admirers and superiors, to seek her in a hovel almost, for so Honoria thought disorder and discomfort rendered the Rectory: that friend, who now gave her all the looks and thoughts and words she could spare from her family, and the future partner of her life.

As Honoria's eyes unconsciously rested upon Jane with fulness of expression, till tears gathered on their sparkling lashes, she turned them away with a quick movement, which made her aware that other persons were studying her face meanwhile. Surprise, confusion, pleasure instantly suffused her cheeks; for Mr. Mulcaster, stepping forward, begged to present Lord Francis Fitz James.

Honoria blushed vermilion. Miss Shafto, who stood by, burnt blue:—"An absolute corpse candle," William muttered.

This was no common introduction our heroine felt; for Lord Francis, evidently

interested by what his fancy had made out of her eyes' fixture upon the blooming and happy Jane, instead of addressing her with any of that enthusiasm of admiration which Mr. Mulcaster had taught her to expect, (and which may dazzle, but rarely penetrates,) accosted her with that look of melancholy sweetness, and those silver tones, which so many women had found as dangerous as sweet.

"We have been impertinently guessing at thoughts, from looks, Miss O'Hara," said His Lordship, avoiding with well-bred delicacy the mention of their morning rencontre. "Mulcaster pretends to great skill in the art: however, in such eyes as he has been pronouncing upon, I venture to think reading is easy."

Honoraria could not misunderstand the compliment, though she only noticed it by a deeper blush, and a more shaded eye:—for the fixed, yet pleadingly soft gaze of the speaker, seemed prophetic of more than admiration.

"I'll tell you what your face was saying," resumed William, intending to give

his companion full time to gaze himself into a desperate passion : "as you looked after Lady Haverford, you said to yourself, ' A bewitching creature verily ; but no one need trouble themselves by giving her a whole heart — a slice will do ; — the thinnest slice possible, so that it has but a large apparent surface.' "

"O, Mr. Mulcaster ! was there only that odious expression in my face ?"

"Indeed, indeed, there was a very different one there also !" repeated Lord Francis with energy. "Even Major Stanhope must have been satisfied with the *heart-look* resting on his destined wife."

Lord Francis suffocated more than one sigh as he ended ; then hastily, and as if anxious to efface the energy of his last words, added : "Mulcaster, you must now present me to your sisters."

His Lordship was instantly introduced to Jane and Henrietta : but though he talked with grace and ease to them, Honoria for ever felt his eye upon her, and felt or fancied that it expressed a wil-

lingness, nay, almost a wish, to gaze away his heart. Every person in, and near the party, made the same observation.

Once she caught him looking down at her foot; he smiled as their glance encountered, and again she was covered with blushes. She was vexed at herself for a confusion which she was sure those around would misinterpret! and conscious that her embarrassment would have ceased at first, had Lord Francis frankly reverted to their morning scene together, she was rather displeased with him for this distressing niceness: but His Lordship uttering a wringing sigh suspended her displeasure. William Mulcaster was as much startled at its sound as she herself; he stooped to her ear; "Poor Fitz James is thinking of his sister—he told me your figure was like hers." Honoria's bosom was all repentance and compassion. Calls to the dance now hurried away Stanhope and Jane, Henrietta and Captain Adair: Honoria, left cooped up between Lord Francis and Mr. Mulcaster, appeared to be engaged to one of them;

therefore, by a whimsical chance her hand remained unsought.

William enchanted with this, was what he called stirring the pretty Honor up, to charm his noble friend : and in a few minutes, conversation very unlike usual ball-room talk, gave to the fine countenance of Lord Francis, that air of inspiration which is often so provokingly bestowed by a very moderate light, shining through features of Grecian contour.

Honor looked round for Delaval Fitz Arthur, almost mechanically. She was not aware that she had the habit of never enjoying any thing, without wishing for his participation. But Fitz Arthur, returned from executing some commission of his father's about their carriage, was going down the dance with a sister of Lord Brinkbourn's, too solicitously watching the steps of his blundering brother Thomas, following with the gay Lady Haverford, to see even Honor, much less her dreaded companion.

Fitz Arthur's back was to her and Lord Francis ; but as he moved on, she

had occasional views of his face in profile. All the home virtues and affections were in the expression of that amiable countenance, while he watched the dawning in his brother, of a better ambition than more serious instruction had succeeded in rousing. It was a countenance to love; but Honoria was at the same moment considering one, formed to become a model for a sculptor; and she didn't at the time, do its mere material graces justice.

"Lord Francis never dances:" William suddenly said, seeing a figure advancing, "but you'll dance with me, Miss O'Hara; and, as I dare say you are in no hurry to trip it, I'll go explore a little, and come back with a cargo of discoveries."

Honoria had not time to dissent, for stepping forward to intercept the expected intruder, William exclaimed, "Well, Mr. Tudor! when I saw you last, you were studying that complicated piece of mechanism, a lady's thimble—have you made one yet? Miss O'Hara is engaged to me; so don't think of poaching upon

my manor. You may have *Shafto* chase all to yourself: that's fair! I scruple no heroic act for a friend."

Back bowed the conceited and gratified scholar; and away sauntered William, with an affectation of more than his natural lightness of heart, as he saw Lady Catherine Eustace's head turned towards him from the dance.

Honorina was now in a manner left alone with Lord Francis Fitz James. In her present state of mind, the situation was embarrassing, especially as she observed Lord Francis's manner assume a greater air of abandonment to whatever impression she had made: she was astonished to find that in perverse proportion to his evidently increasing admiration, her inclination seemed to shrink from it; perhaps it was the malignant look of Mrs. Shafto, who was hovering near that end of the tent. Whatever it was, she believed propriety required her to get away from this *tête à tête*, and prefacing her request with a graceful apology, she requested Lord Francis would do her the

favour of finding Mr. Mulcaster; and telling him, she saw they were going to dance a reel, so she would sit down till the country dances began.

As she turned from him directly to seek Sir Everard Fitz Arthur, at the upper end of the tent, His Lordship could only bow and obey.

“What is that move for?” asked the dandy of the phaeton, of Miss Augusta Shafto, to whom Sir Thomas Sykes had presented him during the breakfast. “Don’t you see!” responded Miss Augusta, “Delaval Fitz Arthur has done dancing. He is surer game, than a bird of passage, like that conceited, disagreeable Lord Francis.”

These remarks were intended, by one of the speakers at least, to be heard by their subject; and they were heard: Honoria’s eye-flash showed it. She looked so nobly handsome at the moment, that perhaps the invidious Miss Augusta wished she had not brought such proud beauty to her cheek. But Mr. Sprat, the charioteer of the most dashing equi-

page on the course that morning, was gaping for more food for *his* envious contempt of the Lord Francis Fitz James; and Miss Augusta hastened to pour in exclamations against the bad taste of His Lordship's dress, the horrid colour of his coat, the miserable mediocrity of his neckcloth; to the complete rapture of a youngling commoner, in a coat of grass-green, and a cravat of stifling circumference.

Honorina meanwhile was hastily asking herself, where all her agitation on the score of Lord Francis was gone? Something had failed, she could not tell what; or else all highly raised expectations, and eagerly pursued objects, were to have the fate of the Abyssinian traveller's, when he reached the source of the Nile, — disappointment! disenchantment! — a feeling that all is vanity! To the chiseled beauty of His Lordship's features, *to the poetry of his countenance*, to the interest excited by his voice, manner, and conversation, she did exact justice; but enthusiasm was not mixed with it. In short,

the spark had not fallen upon the altar of her heart, that was evident : in spite of prepossession and anticipations, Lord Francis was not the fated person. Thus quickly, perhaps rashly, certainly foolishly, did Honoria decide in five minutes, after a dialogue of fifteen.

She now saw Fitz Arthur disengaging himself from persons seeking to detain him ; for with a bounding heart, he had noted her breaking from Lord Francis Fitz James. When, on reaching her side, he found her all crimson agitation, and heard that she wished to get near his father, till her partner should claim her, his late despondency melted into air, and his pulses throbbed anew with lively hope.

Trembling and silent he took her hand to lead her across the tent — but the reel dancers were an impassable barrier ; they were obliged to wait for an opportunity of getting through their mazy line. As Fitz Arthur naturally retained the hand he had taken, Honoria felt the trembling of his, — at another time she

might have asked what agitated him, but she was not in a mood to trust herself with speech, — a single word of any emotion, she felt would make her burst into tears. Miss Augusta's cruel insinuation had pierced her very heart; and she durst not relieve that heart now, by revealing it to the only person who had wound himself completely into her confidence!

Honorina knew not exactly what she was feeling, nor why she was feeling keenly. She felt that Fitz Arthur really loved her; she saw that Lord Francis admired her, was interested in her: she knew what her friends at St. Cuthberts wished and expected for her, from this distinguished Lord Francis: she remembered all that her enemies had ever said of her designs upon Fitz Arthur. She never then could accept the hand of Fitz Arthur; and perhaps she never would choose to take that of his loftier rival. — Honorina's heart was full to bursting; and a sense of deep affliction struggled for victory, with the infirmity of her character — pride, criminal pride.

Fitz Arthur meanwhile was fluctuating between dread and delight, conscious to something unusual in Honoria's avoidance of his eyes, as he addressed her; to a quicker heaving of her bosom, as she kept looking down and listening to him. Could it be? he thought; had his forced attendance upon other women that day, pained her? Was it indeed, as Hylton and his father assured him, that she had shrunk hitherto from his obvious affection only from the most flattering reasons?

Impatient of suspense, he hastily enquired how she liked Lord Francis Fitz James, her champion, the bard she honoured with such partial admiration!

"I do think I ought to say he is every thing I expected. Yet, though he certainly is most eloquent, most interesting, most unlike all other people, and most particularly handsome, — I am — and I cannot say why, — disappointed!"

"Disappointed!" repeated Fitz Arthur, his face almost emitting rays.

"Yes, indeed! — though perhaps not in the character and manner themselves.

but in the impression I expected they would make upon me. See what a foolish creature I am acknowledging myself!"

Honorina was never reserved to Fitz Arthur; if she began a conversation with resolutions of self-guard, she ended by forgetting them. At that moment Fitz Arthur's heart almost suspended its pulsation from excess of happy emotion. They were just then crossing the tent. — "You are staying at St. Cuthberts," he said, hurryingly. "If I call there, to-morrow, directly after breakfast, may I ask for you? — I have something to say — to sue for — if I have the courage after all!" —

"Any thing I can do!" interrupted Honorina, as they made their way towards Sir Everard. "What is it? Tell me now, that I may oblige you instantly."

"Not now, — not here!" repeated Fitz Arthur, his voice scarcely audible from tumultuous feelings, — "to-morrow, — at St. Cuthberts, dear Miss O'Hara!" and unconscious of what he was about,

he once more pressed the hand he was yet holding, and abruptly relinquishing it, left Honoria within a few paces of his father and his youngest brother.

As Honoria, all agitated and alarmed, and afraid of herself, took the seat the Baronet eagerly offered, by his side, he bade Thomas follow his brother, who was to take him home; bidding the urchin remember, that all his indulgences that day had been granted to Delaval's request; and that, consequently, he must take care and be a good boy. Thomas looked exceedingly inclined to be a bad one: — but summoning up an expression of face something between sullenness and obedience, the ill-conditioned young gentleman went off as he was directed.

Honoria, instead of listening to this short monologue, was fortifying herself against the tender disturbance Fitz Arthur's looks and words had given to her foregone resolutions, and to what she believed her foregone sentiments concerning him. She was bringing all the insulting speeches and acts of the Shafto

family in formidable array to oppose this transitory weakness ; and trying to dwell with livelier feelings of gratification and anticipation upon the person, talents, rank, admiration, and *éclat* of Lord Francis Fitz James.

Sir Everard kept eyeing her as she was involuntarily following with her eyes the object then possessing her thoughts ; this was his son. He felt strongly moved to broach the momentous business. He thought, that if he were to seize the present moment for expressing his son's wishes, it would afford scope for many confidential details, which must exalt Delaval in her esteem, and which Delaval would never relate of himself. — Why should he *not* do so ? — It would be such joy for himself to witness the joy, the surprise, the gratefulness of the amiable orphan ! It would make him so happy, to go home instantly and tell his son he might return and claim the hand his father had asked and obtained for him ! — A doubt of Honoria's rapturous acceptance of the proposal he meditated,

the artless Baronet did not entertain. He suddenly enquired if she would give up dancing for a quarter of an hour, as he had something to say which he should not like to have interrupted.

Honorina, never dreaming of an avowal from Sir Everard's lips, as his son's proxy, expressed her ready pleasure in giving him as much of her time and attention, as he gratified her by wishing for. "Well, then," the Baronet said, "let us move a little farther that way:—this snug corner of flag-staffs and laurel boughs, will keep us out of sight."

Poor Sir Everard recked not, that what sheltered one party, might soon afterwards conceal another: he did not observe Mrs. Shafto loitering near; complacently viewing what she hoped her Augusta's incipient conquest, in the shape of young Mr. Spratt, jerking his porringer pate with the sudden notion of being a man, and a most admired man.

Honorina was so often made Sir Everard's confidant on the subject of his two younger boys, and his own bene-

volent embarrassments, that she prepared herself to listen with subsiding emotion : but her eye was momentarily arrested by the sight of Lord Francis Fitz James, at some distance. He was now leaning up against the side of the tent, neither looking for her, nor at the dancing; evidently yielding to meditations foreign to the scene ; and only noticing, with an air of disdainfulness and arrogance, (as they challenged his attention,) the few very fine ladies whom she had just before heard buzzing, “ O, there’s Lord Francis !” She could not marvel at his disregard of their flattering attempts to begin a flirtation ; but she thought less obvious contempt would have been more amiable.

Sir Everard quickly drew off her attention. He began as if about to rehearse a task ; and indeed he had revolved such an imagined scene as the present, till he was quite prepared to go through it ably. He first made a short exposition of his tangled affairs previous to his son’s return from India ; then related all that son had

done to retrieve him, and prevent future embarrassments ; told the tale of Stephen ; explained Fitz Arthur's self-denying motives for quitting a profession he liked ; and, lastly, enlarged upon his own desire of rewarding such a son, by bestowing on him a wife wholly devoted to his welfare and happiness. He then said how he had contrived to disencumber one estate, that settlements might be made upon such a woman ; finishing, by assuring his astonished hearer, (with more warmth of heart, perhaps, than refinement of delicacy,) that although half the county might call him an old fool for his pains, he was ready to give up some tempting prospects for his son in the way of marriage, and open his arms to Miss O'Hara as the object of Delaval's sincere affection.

Whilst the simple-minded Baronet was thus eloquent, exulting in the rapidly changing colours of Honoria's cheek, as she sat panting and bewildered, unable to see clearly how she ought to act, little did he guess what in a single instant

fixed that wavering colour, and sealed that heart again; what at once blotted from her sight all his son's merits and sacrifices, even his own excess of generosity; it was a glimpse of Mrs. Shafto, slipping behind the laurels to listen to their discourse. With fatal precipitation our heroine turned round, and in a few words, but those decisive almost to haughtiness, acknowledged her poverty, and declined the honour of his son's addresses. Not allowing herself time for a second entreaty, she then rose hastily, and would have said something of kind and grateful import, by way of message to his son; but an unaccountable choaking sensation prevented even the attempt, and abruptly breaking away, she lost herself amongst the dancers.

Sir Everard, absolutely stiffened into stone, by astonishment and displeasure, remained like a figure cut on a tomb. The moment Honoria ceased to be visible, the odious cause of this infatuated act glided out from behind her laurel screen, and taking a seat beside Sir

Everard, ere he was yet awakened from his stupor, began her usual strain of expressed interest in him and his ; flattering him on his vulnerable point — his children ; and extending admiration even to the rebellious Thomas.

After having duly expatiated upon the young gentleman's growth and good dancing, and prophesied, therefore, that he would turn out a great naval character, a second Lord Howe, she proceeded to comment upon the young ladies present : it was then easy to get at the subject of Miss O'Hara.

Of Miss O'Hara she talked long and ably ; determining to give the death-blow to her power at Arthur's Court, she lamented the imprudence with which that poor vain girl was destroying her own prospects. " After all the pains she, Mrs. Shafto, had taken to induce young Chaplin to think of her seriously, and after the girl had given him encouragement too, as she understood from Mrs. Meredith, it was evident that she was actually conceited enough to fancy it

possible for her to aim at the hand of Lord Francis Fitz James, the Marquess of Killarney's son! Mrs Shafto had heard from Lady Haverford a very embarrassing story about her, and that strange character; a something of their meeting before breakfast on the hills, when quiet people were in their beds; when some romping scene took place. She could not say exactly why or how, but my Lord Francis had obtained possession of the young lady's shoe; a most improper circumstance! and since then Mrs. Shafto had observed her trying to allure him into attentions which were highly indecorous in a young person of her condition to wish to attract. In short, Mrs. Shafto was pained to say, she began to think this Miss O'Hara, not only a dangerous, but a very light-minded young woman; and she could only hope for worthy Mr. Meredith's sake, that she might not fall into some unpleasant predicament, while endeavouring to draw the sons of ancient families and noblemen into a *mesalliance*. She was shocked to discover so much art and design and bold-

ness in any young creature so very pretty and plausible. She really ought to beg her kinsman's pardon for venting all this upon him, but she was so displeased and disappointed!"

Sir Everard writhed with torture during this elaborate exposition. He had warmly regarded Honoria for her own sake; and the moment he became aware that his son's happiness depended upon her, and believed he could obtain such happiness for him, he had loved her with greater fondness. Her unexpected and short refusal had at once unseated partial feeling; and now that Mrs. Shafto's falsely coloured information made him believe his son rejected for the *ignis fatuus* of a title, his indignation knew no bounds.

To doubt Mrs. Shafto was impossible; for he had disbelieved her former assurance that Miss O'Hara disdained and ridiculed Delaval; and Miss O'Hara had herself in a manner confirmed the truth of this assertion.

He now started from his seat, exclaiming with an oath, a transgression of rare

occurrence with him, that he believed Miss O'Hara deserved all the ill she said of her, and that he should henceforth act accordingly.

With this satisfactory declaration, not troubling himself with the fear of what Mrs. Shafto might gather from it, he abruptly turned from her, and left the place.

For many minutes Honoria stood on the spot to which she had hurried, without consciousness of what was going on before her, or hearing the different men who asked her to join the reel. A death-like sensation had succeeded on her cheeks, and in her heart, to their late glow of proud triumph: she felt as if she had just swallowed a dose of poison; and knew not to what agonies of grief and contrition she were next to awaken.

What did this sensation mean? Was it not regret for having given such pain to two persons equally loved and honoured by her? was it not shame for having felt exultation in refusing Delaval Fitz Arthur within the hearing of his insolent relation? It could be nothing else. It

was so grievous to afflict the good, the generous! so humiliating to feel conscious of a pitiful crime! this tacit connivance at Mrs. Shafto's eaves-dropping, was a pitiful crime, perhaps as criminal as the mean act itself. She had seen Mrs. Shafto slip behind the banners, and she had not resisted the temptation of letting her remain there to hear her refusal of the heir of Arthur's Court! A word, a glance from her, would have checked Sir Everard.

Honorina was so utterly lost in these thoughts that she did not hear Mr. Mulcaster repeatedly asking whether she did or did not choose to dance.

Lady Haverford's voice awakened her.

"You dear creature!" exclaimed the pretty Viscountess. "I have not been able to say ten words to you all this day — you see how I am torn to pieces by every body! But to-morrow — you dine at Monksden, they tell me — then we *shall* meet — we *will* talk — I *will* have you all to myself for one hour by the clock. I have told Lady Henderson so; and

she has just invited Lord Francis, and he has consented—what a miracle!” (Lifting and pressing Honoria’s hands in hers, with every energetic breath.) “I have worlds to say. My dear, what a delightful county!—such charming people all of them! That handsome Captain Fitz Arthur with those large garter-blue eyes—did you ever see such eyes?—that dear old Sir Everard!—and those beauteous Mulcaster girls!—no—you are all, much too charming!—There! don’t you see those poor Ladies Lumley looking so beseechingly—they want me to help them in something. I must go to them and their officers. To-morrow—remember to-morrow.” And away flew this real victim of popularity, to smile, and exclaim, and protest, and promise to other admirers of both sexes.

Honoria heedless even of her, in her present state of feeling, looked back to the seat where she had left Sir Everard; it was vacant; he was no where to be seen. His son had been long gone; and what Sir Everard had to tell, would pre-

vent Delaval from returning. Honoria now tried to rally back her spirits or her pride ; in short, to stifle conscience, and right feeling : and giving her hand to Mr. Mulcaster, she enquired what they were going to do.

“ Why go down a country dance ; ” was the reply. “ The reels are done with. Where are your wits, fair lady ? — You look as if you had just come from hearing Mr. Tudor’s lecture upon chemistry, in the corner yonder, over Mr. Spratt’s brilliant shirt-pin. If you had seen how the puppy stared when he was solemnly assured that all diamonds were only crystallized charcoal ! That Tudor ! if he keeps loading his noble pupils like two packhorses, he’ll be clever if he ever gets their faculties on their legs, and makes the said faculties *use* those legs. Why don’t you laugh Miss O’Hara ? or say, ‘ That is not a bad observation of yours, Mr. Mulcaster. ’ ”

Honoria confessed she had not been attending to him sufficiently.

“ Why, what has good Sir Everard been

saying to you," he resumed kindly, "to make you look so dismal? no trash, I hope, of that grim white woman's; (an appellation he often gave to Mrs. Shafto;) but we'll have our triumph there, yet. I am no seer, if before three months are flown, you have it not in your option to be Lady Francis Fitz James. That title would be a cannon ball to her!"

"Pray, pray, Mr. Mulcaster!" cried Honoria, almost with tearful earnestness, shrinking now from the bare idea of such a distinction.

"Well! you'll see:" persisted William, mistaking the cause of her obvious agitation. "The veriest idiot can find out when a man is positively struck. Lord Francis pretended that he did not remember your person in the least at Arthur's Court, though he recollected sparring for you with Mr. Frazer: that was stuff—that was indorsing the bill of indifference too much. Then he would have it, I was in love with you; betokening that he thought no man could know you without being in such desperate

plight. Now you must know that I have not the honour to be the least in love with you, (thank my stars!) and never had; though I like you passing much,—yet, not quite as much as darling Jane.”

“Now do cease, Mr. Mulcaster.”

William would not cease. He had not acquired his *pet-name* of Prince William for nothing: and as those who gave it him in his own home, almost delighted in being swayed by a brother as affectionate as he was whimsical, he frequently exercised, or usurped the same authority over persons to whom he was nothing. He now continued running on about Lord Francis, introducing every circumstance likely to prepossess his hearer in her champion's favour. Aware of Honoria's sympathy with the sorrows of genuine affection, he dwelt principally upon Lord Francis's deep affliction for the death of his sister, finishing the description with, “I don't tell you Fitz James went about, like that fool the Duke of Anjou, with Death's heads on his buttons, when he lost his mistress in

some King of France's time, that I can't take time to remember ; — but he never has been quite himself since ; always with a touch of the miserable on his visage, as yours had five minutes ago."

Warned by this remark upon herself, Honoria cleared her countenance as well as she could, and tried to meet the couple dancing down, with some attempt at her usual life.

Whether it be indeed true, that what we feign, we feel at last, or whether a perpetual recurrence to the expected visit of Fitz Arthur on the following day, tended to tranquillize her ; whatever it was, Honoria certainly found her extreme emotion subside, and saw the black cloud disperse, which had so lately covered all her feelings and expectations. What those expectations were, we must not too closely examine, since she refrained from doing so herself. Sufficient, that as they strengthened unconsciously under the influence of certain recollections connected with many a look and many a conversation of days gone by,

the light of her countenance gradually rekindled, and she was able to finish her dancing with easy grace, and reply to the questions of surrounding friends and admirers.

Amongst the latter, it appeared as if Lord Francis Fitz James were actually inclined to enlist himself: for when the set was broken up, and William led her to a seat near his sister's, His Lordship left a short, milkmaid-looking young woman, with big bold eyes, who had been relentlessly talking to him, and turning his melancholy regard upon Honoria, commenced conversation.

One of Lady Hexham's party struck his disabled arm lightly with her fan, in passing. Lord Francis looked up. "Who was your little vulgar friend?" carelessly asked the questioner.

Lord Francis replied with equal carelessness, "Only a cousin of mine: — I mean the wife of a cousin."

"O, I remember — the great Staffordshire fortune! My dear Lord Francis, didn't you die of that ball-gown at four o'clock in the day?"

"No faith! I rather thought it pretty."

The young lady shrugged her shoulders and curtsied away, leaving Honoria impressed with two notions. First, that what she had always suspected, was true, that nothing is more vulgar than being over-dressed; nothing more freely indulged in, by the *best-bred* persons, than ridicule, even to what the lower world would deem an indecorum; and that Lord Francis had unamiable pleasure in mortifying those who might be silly, yet not malignant. The tone in which he had pronounced his oracular judgment upon a gown, which, it was evident, he had never looked at, denoted this too plainly. Involuntarily, Honoria thought of Delaval Fitz Arthur's indulgent nature, so averse to inflict even deserved chastisement.

Lord Francis engaged in general conversation with the small circle round him, and for some time he did so, without reviving interest in her mind towards him. Compunctious feelings had quite deadened her enjoyment in matters of mere taste. But when a question of Major

Stanhope's, concerning that part of Ireland upon which the French under General Hoche had just made their alarming attempt, — when this elicited Lord Francis's generous sympathy with their misguided country, her interests rekindled ; and again she looked at, and listened to him, with eyes that matched the varied and fine expressions of his eloquence.

In vain Miss Shafto, disdaining men in a marching regiment, drew back from the possible attentions of Colonel Mason's subalterns, and condescended to order about, the obsequious Mr. Tudor, with supercilious indolence : Honoria observed not, that her scorned admirer was thus parading the chains imposed by pride and pretension ! In vain did Mrs. Shafto audibly repeat what “that very fine young man with her daughter Augusta, had just been saying with such elegant point, of a certain pretty-looking girl present, — that she was cutting her own throat, while hoping to wound every man's heart !”

Honoria had no longer an ear for any

thing injurious to herself. She was all absorbed by sympathy, with many a woe in her beloved country, affectingly dwelt on by Lord Francis.

In every thing he uttered, every worthy heart might sympathize ; for Lord Francis did not advocate rebellion and outrage ; he spoke but in the spirit of that Christian doctrine, which exhorts *parents not to provoke their children to wrath, lest they be discouraged* : he sought palliation of outrages, by painting provocations ; and delineated passions, which he endeavoured to prove, might by skilful management in those intrusted with the government of Ireland, be turned to the purposes of noblest action.

The candid-minded Stanhope was one of his readiest converts ; and as one heart-wringing story gave a daughter of Erin an excuse for tears, Honoria internally thanked him : for tears had long been in her heart (though from a different source) ; and now, when they rose into her eyes unseen and unnoticed, she found they relieved her deep oppression,

and softly stole them from her cheeks with the edge of her fan.

William Mulcaster, much as he too was interested in the oratory of his friend, having heard all Mrs. Shafto's bitter-
nesses, took care to let her hear in return, by a few apt words of allusion to the volume of *Feelings and Fancies*, who was really their author. He now abruptly asked Lord Francis if he would be presented to the ladies of Shafto Place. — “Not for the world!” was the abhorrent exclamation, and in no under tone. Lord Francis had no ruth for persons he despised: he had not William's excuse for thus wounding Mrs. Shafto's self-love, since he knew her only as a disagreeable pretender to fashion; her malignity was quite unknown to him.

As he started back from this hated introduction, and Mrs. Shafto's visage quivered in every pale feature with double-dyed mortification and surprise, Lady Henderson advanced, and politely reminded Miss O'Hara, that she was included in a dinner invitation to the St.

Euthberts family for the ensuing day: adding, that in addition to their friends of Arthur's Court, she would have the two Misses Clavering, whom she expected to find arrived when she got back from that morning's amusement.

Agitated and confused by the mention of Fitz Arthur, in her present state of mind, Honoria stammered out some words of obliged acceptance; — instantly comforting herself by the certainty, that if Fitz Arthur did not keep his engagement on the morrow, — if he should not come to supplicate for himself, and to convince her, that without her life would be a wilderness to him, — if he feared, by so intruding himself, to be for ever banished from her presence, — at any rate she should meet him at Monksden, and be able to testify her grateful, tender, unaltered friendship for him. She *would* find then some way by which to convince him of her indifference to all other men, even to Lord Francis Fitz James.

She turned with the purpose of avoid-

ing this formidable idol ; he had spared her the task. With one of those capricious changes, said to be frequent in him, Lord Francis had suddenly quitted the St. Cuthberts party, and retreated to another part of the tent, where he stood with his arms folded, and his head inclined ; every feature altered in its expression, and so regardless of what was passing round him, that Honoria almost decided upon its being an affectation of abstraction. Nothing could justify such instant and evident loss of consciousness to things without, except some extraordinary rencontre or conversation ; and Lord Francis had not been so surprised.

It was clear Lord Francis was affected, and purposely fantastic ; for though others had not remarked so nicely, Honoria felt, that upon his second seeking of her, Lord Francis had worn a different manner from what distinguished him in their first introduction. His eyes sought her countenance with equal admiration, but not so exclusively as before ; — they were calmly admiring ; not eager, wish-

ful, melting, and troubled, as they had been then! — Their full, soft light, did not embarrass her, as their repeated agitated glance had done at first. She felt, too, that Lord Francis did not wish her to fancy that he admired her more than others did; — and strange to say, after all her girlish imaginations, and bewilderment of feeling, she found the conviction give her joy.

While pondering over this, a buzz around her drew off her attention.

“O, no, it’s impossible!” — “She cannot let him do it!” — “So ridiculous!” — “How very entertaining!” — passed from one fine lady to another. The next moment, Mr. Mulcaster, with disordered and hasty steps, came up to his sister: — “I’m going, Jane!” he said, hurriedly. “On my soul, I can’t stand it!”

“Stand what! dearest William?”

“The sight of Lord Brinkbourn dancing,” he returned, more agitated as he spoke. — “I HAVE some feeling for her left! I cannot stand it!”

He was at the lower end of the tent,

and through its door of drapery, ere Jane could question him farther.

“Dear, generous William!” exclaimed his sister, turning for the sure sympathy of Stanhope’s look. “What kindness under all his levity to-day! — sparing even her a real mortification!”

“Yes, my Jane!” whispered her lover; “you may call him generous; for, on my word, I believe he has just spared her the only mortification her vain heart is capable of; — every thing else, to-day, has but grazed her skin.”

Honorina had not time to pause upon her own pleased conviction of Mr. Mulcaster’s good feeling, for her hand was claimed by Colonel Mason; and she was led to the dance, where Lord Brinkbourn was actually seen agonizing through a most complex figure, with Lady Haverford for his partner; whose flickering smile, and occasional arch glance at Lady Catherine, seemed to claim even her enjoyment of the treat his misery afforded.

To Honorina, the sight of a man dancing

in convulsions would have appeared just as agreeable ; for Lord Brinkbourn evidently felt the despair of having neither natural ear, nor educated feet. Whether he had been taught to dance, is a mystery ; — certain it is, he was always beginning a step as his partner was ending one ; and seeking her at the bottom of the set, when he should have been inseparable from her at the top of it.

“ I shall have to hue and cry him, my dear,” whispered Lady Haverford, as she flitted like a gay gauze-fly past Honoria, “ miles,” as she called it, from Lord Brinkbourn.

“ O, how charming ! how very comical !” ejaculated one of Lady Hexham’s young ladies. “ Can you survive it, Lord Frederick ?”

“ Only by the greatest of all possible exertions ;” was the composed answer, indolently lifting his eye-glass. “ Do tell me, Lady Ann, — is he clambering up Lady Haverford ? Do you think she has a bird’s nest on her head ? — Those sharp knees of his assaulting her pretty

nose with a jerk at every yell of that horrid band! — O, he is much too good!”

“What a treat!” — “Poor Lady Catherine!” — “My dear, she’s dying of laughing all this time!” — such were the amiable remarks circulating amongst the distinguished friends of the Hexham family.

Honorina felt their influence withering her desire of ever belonging to a set which Lady Haverford’s graces, and native kindliness, had presented before her with such enchantment: evidently it was a set living solely for their own amusement, and seeking it in perpetual, inordinate ridicule. Her good sense and good feeling told her how surely every generous sensibility and right principle must perish in such an atmosphere. No wonder Lord Francis disdained it. But she soon remembered that there was a much more numerous set amongst the high and noble of the land; she had only to recall the high-minded, and simple-mannered Lord Wearmouth, with his benign and graceful mother, to allow that

she was commenting on a few outlaws of fashion, who, refusing to submit to the regulations of their wiser equals, chose to herd in their own little wilderness, and call their lawlessness sovereignty. So impressed was Honoria by this offensive spirit, that had she not known Lord Francis Fitz James was a guest at Ravenshaw, she would have suspected him of making one in a league to make her ridiculous, by affecting openly to admire her. "They are such masters of the art," she thought, "that who is to know when they are sincere."

Even her pleasant partner, with his long military queue, and rattling accoutrements, was evidently a matter of jest.

Colonel Mason, however, was blessedly unsuspecting of such a base return for the courteous attentions of himself and his officers. He strode smilingly down the dance, with as good a grace as a fencer; proud of his beautiful partner; and pleased, by seeing pleased faces around him.

Happily for all who were beginning

to weary, Lady Hexham prevented a second exhibition of her future son-in-law, by asking for her carriage the moment he escaped from the dance; and Lady Henderson following her example, the Misses Mulcaster, who were nominally under that lady's care during the entertainment, were obliged to order theirs.

As our heroine was gallantly led along by Colonel Mason, she saw Lord Francis Fitz James, loitering, or forgetting himself, near the entrance; declining different invitations into carriages that would set him down at Ravenshaw. At sight of Lady Henderson and her fair charges he recovered recollection, and advanced, asking if any of them would have the charity to take him away, as he had let Lord Wearmouth go home without him.

Monksden lying nearer Ravenshaw than St. Cuthberts, Lady Henderson was about to speak, but Major Stanhope, on Jane's hasty assurance that Sophy would now have the Dean's place in their coach, eagerly offered a seat in his tandem, and it was accepted.

Lady Henderson obviously suspected that Lord Francis would have preferred exchanging with Miss Sophia, for she smiled upon Honoria without speaking. His Lordship got into the light carriage, and away drove Stanhope, determined to obey an expressive glance from the eyes he always understood, which commanded him to say all manner of charming things to Lord Francis about Honor O'Hara.

CHAP. VIII.

As there were only five friendly girls in the carriage, their conversation was principally engrossed by remarks upon the amusements of the morning, and the persons who had shared them in their company.

Jane could not conceive why her dear Honoria was looking so grave and jaded; she had heard her so admired; and she had seen Mrs. Shafto absolutely sick with spite at the open admiration of Lord Francis, whom all the other ladies were dying to get to speak to them. Jane was absolutely transported with the effect her friend had produced! She would have been perfectly happy if she had seen her poor dear William so — but William *was* unhappy, — his last action had betrayed it. However Jane thanked Heaven that this morning had completely *shown up* Lady

Catherine, and she hoped his good heart would soon find some really deserving person to bestow itself on."

Honorina could not account for her heart feeling like a lump of lead, even while her friend was flattering her with an assurance which not a week ago would have enchanted her, namely, that she had deeply interested the interesting bard of Fancies and Feelings. She kept looking from those in the carriage, at those without, with a vague anxiety of which she was hardly conscious, until Henrietta demurely asked who she was looking for.

Honorina blushed as she stammered out, "Really I don't know," much to the amusement of her youngest friends, who considered themselves privileged, from such a silly answer, to accuse her of looking for Lord Francis, — "Or for Charles Stanhope, perhaps," laughed Sophia, "out of pure regard for Jane."

Isabella Mulcaster was the first to perceive that Honorina's eyes glistened with something more than their ordinary liquid lustre; tears were suffusing them, though

she was joining their jests at herself, with extravagance of assumed mirth. Miss Mulcaster's gentle nature made the sight of any distress, however trivial, painful to witness; and supposing that Honoria might really feel that Lord Francis was just the person she would wish to like, yet sought to avoid, from their different situations, she changed the subject to a general discussion of dresses and decorations. Her sister took the hint, and Honoria, by degrees, recovered.

As the carriage skirted an end of the broad turf road which led to the back of Arthur's Court, she looked out again. The now westering sun was illuminating its long range of stained windows, and dark woods; a strong light was on the majestic portico of the back-front, under which she thought she saw Fitz Arthur himself standing; but it was merely fancy: the next instant she knew it was merely fancy, and the place appeared to her painfully without sign of life and cheerfulness within. She drew in her head, with a dejected feeling, which told

her that she was not formed to play away a matchless heart.

“But I shall see him to-morrow morning — or at Monksden in the evening,” she said to herself, “and after I have shown him how sorry I am to have given my refusal so proudly — so ungratefully — my conscience will be appeased and this torment will cease.”

So tormenting however did Honoria's conscience continue to prove, that for the whole remainder of that day, even this purpose and hope for the morrow did not succeed in procuring a respite from its reproaches. All that Sir Everard had narrated, and all he had to say of his son's passionate devotedness to her, augmented this sense of faultiness. She now began to suspect that Delaval Fitz Arthur's heart was a volume of such noble matter as must be loved when studied — matter that may be studied till the reader wishes to learn nothing else. Even the graceful image of Lord Francis Fitz James with his gifted eloquence, and talent at awakening strange interest, ceased to affect her.

William Mulcaster, having quitted the officer's fête with Lord Wearmouth and Mr. Pemberton, had dined at Ravenshaw, returning at night with copious additions to his foregone testimonies of Lord Francis's admiration ; protesting that it had already begun to assume the true sentimental tone ; for that His Lordship had been all reverie and sighings and gentleness, — a mood he never was in, except something actually gave him, or promised him, much emotion.

Honorina endeavoured to silence these indiscreet representations ; but she did it in such perturbation of spirit, from the entire change of her thoughts on one subject, that those who attributed it to particular interest in William's friend were very pardonable for so mistaking her. She retired to bed, — not to sleep, but to wish fruitlessly for Mrs. Preston, to whom she would have gone for light on her own feelings, and from whom she would have asked counsel and guidance, had not so many, many miles separated them.

The next morning she rose with a nervous head-ache. After breakfast it grew worse — as the house-clock chimed each successive quarter of an hour, this head-ache increased. She was watching for the sound of Fitz Arthur's horse. No horse's hoofs were heard: a sweet south wind was freshly waving the boughs of the large acacias near the sitting-room windows, often deceiving her into expectation and heart flutter. Honoria began to find, that Fitz Arthur *could* make her heart beat.

Finding every other remedy fail, the affectionate Jane proposed her trying the air on horseback, and accompanying Isabella, who was going to call at Monksden on Miss Clavering and her sister, as their father wished her to do, ere they met at dinner.

Glad of an excuse to get away from herself and from a friend now almost herself, Honoria accepted the offer of Jane's beautiful mare, sadly certain that the purpose of Fitz Arthur's visit had been forestalled by his father; and willing

to do something pleasing to him by hastening to make the acquaintance of his great favourite, Miss Clavering.

Sophia and Henrietta were otherwise engaged ; and Jane could not go, because Major Stanhope was to leave her in six hours for six days. He was posting up to meet his father in London, to make arrangements and sign papers ; and Jane could not spare one moment from him.

Off, then, cantered the riding party to Monksden. William had recovered his spirits, though singing all the way he rode, " Roy's wife of Aldavalloch," and with any thing but its appropriate expression.

" Miss O'Hara," he suddenly exclaimed, interrupting his own agreeable voice, " for old friendship's sake, I shall tell *you* that I am about to commence a new character : instead of dangling after one woman, I mean to make fools of the whole precious sex, yourself inclusive, if you won't take warning from this generous manifesto. I find from my friend Fitz James's brilliant success in that line,

that nothing takes with you women like the savage or scornful ; so you shall see me smite both the Misses Clavering with a different manner. I have done with running here and there like a postman or an errand-cart, with a hundred commissions in my head, for Lady Anybody. There's an end of all my civility in letting you and Jane pick my pocket for charity and subscriptions, and blankets and flannel petticoats for old women ; Sophy may cease to dream of my riding to bring her trash from the library at Alnwick ; Mrs. Fothergill must reckon no more upon my calling in to scold the miller for her. All these meritorious works, I now give and bequeath to the lawful heir of such things, worthy Colonel Mason, who now approacheth, on a steed, the resurrection of Rozinante, and with the mien of Don Quixote."

The Colonel's courteous greetings cut this manifesto short ; while with teeth displayed in as regular a line as his men at parade, he enquired after the health of the ladies.

Compliments were liberally exchanged between the gallant officer and his youthful friends : they extolled his *déjeûné* ; he professed gratitude for the embellishing appearance of their persons ; then complacently falling into rank with them, turned his horse's head towards Monksden.

County gossip was sure to be discussed, wherever Colonel Mason was in company ; though, to do him justice, it was always canvassed with the purpose of furthering kindly reports, and stifling or softening bad ones. He now gave Mr. Mulcaster several broad hints of what might have allayed his supposed mortification, — namely, that Lady Catherine Eustace's match was whispered to be quite a *got up thing*, manufactured between her mother, and Lord Brinkbourn's aunt ; and that as poor Lady Catherine was so very young and dutiful, her consent was unavoidable.

William shrugged his shoulders, exclaiming, " With all my heart ! " Then, to prove his total unconcern, enquired

how Colonel Mason liked Mr. Spratt, and his splashing equipage. A disputation upon that gentleman's parentage and pretensions followed; by which the ladies learnt that he was an empty-headed coxcomb, intoxicated with being the heir to an enormous fortune, which he despised his father for having gained by honourable merchandize; and that the elder Mr. Spratt having just bought the great Elvetmoor property in a neighbouring county, his hopeful son had come with Sir Thomas Sykes to the races, to fall a prey, William hoped, to Miss Augusta Shafto.

At Monksden, Sir John Henderson was out, but his Lady was in, and the Misses Clavering were in, — that is, they were enjoying the actually summer-weather of a poet's May, in a hermitage not far from the house.

The hermitage at Monksden was one of the show-scenes of the county. It was merely part of the ruins of an ancient chapel, and looked as though some holy recluse had indeed roofed it in from the

weather, by broken boughs of trees, and mattings of ivy. It hung upon a steep bank of the Eden, overlooking a celebrated fall of that lovely little stream, thickly overgrown with weeping birch, and had an air of solitude and stillness inviting to romantic tastes.

To this retired spot the St. Cuthberts party proceeded with Lady Henderson, round whose steps ran a set of healthy, happy children, neither spoiled nor mischievous.

William Mulcaster soon undertook a race to the hermitage, with one of the little girls in his arms, against the biggest boy, an urchin of seven. As the other children hung round his arms and coat-skirts, his progress was more fatiguing than swift; and half-stifled between his own laughter, and the grappling of his pretty burthen, he rushed, hatless, out of breath, not seeing whither he was going, (from the child scattering his hair about,) into the very presence of the Misses Clavering. His sister and Honoria, who came up at the same instant, by a shorter

cut to the hermitage, thought they had never seen him appear to greater advantage.

The glow of his very handsome countenance, its animated expression, the fine abundance of his rich brown hair, the immediate and graceful check of his rushing advance, together with his mingled look of hilarity and confusion, were peculiarly prepossessing; and the way in which both the ladies received his apology, and Lady Henderson's presentation of him, showed he had not made a bad impression.

The Misses Clavering themselves were as interesting a picture as William and his little strangler; for one had started up, with a guitar in her hand; and the other held her straw hat turned into a basket, from which were falling the flowers she had just gathered.

Both sisters were in black; both were elegantly slight, fair, with eyes of softest blue, trembling through long, fair ringlets. They might have been compared to two lilies from the same root; the one,

perhaps, heavy with night dew, the other bright in sunshine : or they might have been looked on as the same star in different skies ; here, as the morning star glittering amongst blushing clouds ; there, as that of evening, gleaming through softening mists. The place itself was picturesquely in harmony with those looking on, and those looked at ; and in the dashing of the fall, the deep verdure of the trees, the freshness of the air rustling amongst the ivy, an immediate subject was found for conversation.

Honoraria, who felt the strongest interest in Miss Clavering, not only from what Fitz Arthur had told her of her history, but from his warm commendation of her character, waited till Miss Mulcaster had said all the little she ever said to a new acquaintance : then, drawing near the object of her attention, soon won her into especial discourse with herself.

Lady Henderson carried away Miss Mulcaster, to show her some white camellias now blowing in the green-house ; and Colonel Mason (who always admired

what ladies admired, from a dandelion to a dandy,) escorting them thither, left the hermitage to the children and the remaining party.

One of the boys, roguishly snatching up the youngest Miss Clavering's guitar, drew her out into the grounds in pursuit of him; Mr. Mulcaster and the other frolic-loving things, could do no less than join in the chase; so that, by mere chance, Honoria found herself left alone with the very person whose esteem she wished to cultivate. No situation is more favourable for ripening intimacy.

Animated by the desire of showing Delaval Fitz Arthur, that if she could not think of him as a lover, she yet regarded him as her directing friend, she now sought to please her, whose acquaintance he had so earnestly recommended to her at Arthur's Court.

When Honoria sought to please, could she fail of doing so? The mixed playfulness and pathos of her tones, as she just touched subjects of deep feeling, and hovered over those of a softer nature,

were grateful to the private feelings of Miss Clavering, whose heart had its own little hoard of sweet and bitter remembrances, its own hopes and fears for the future.

Honorina first talked of the amusements of the previous day ; described all objects on the race-course picturesquely ; and gave little scraps of dialogues caught in the crowd, with that dramatic talent which so often enchanted Fitz Arthur, by its freedom from exaggeration, yet its tincture of her own charm. She even detailed her impressions from the new modes of life she had glimpsed there ; bringing all the characters in review before Miss Clavering's mental sight : from the alternately animated and listless Lord Francis Fitz James, to the piquant Lady Haverford. On the members of Arthur's Court and St. Cuthberts, her discourse lingered ; and Miss Clavering appearing as well inclined as herself to talk principally of them, their conversation then assumed a tone of livelier interest.

Warmly sympathizing in Honorina's

avowed reverence for Sir Everard, Miss Clavering could go beyond her in merited encomiums of Delaval Fitz Arthur. It was now her turn to engross conversation. She had many an anecdote to relate of her father's young aide-de-camp, while in India. His active services for the families of brother officers dying there, and leaving portionless children behind; his zeal and address in making up quarrels and so preventing duels; his presence of mind, and intrepid conduct, in saving himself and a handful of soldiers, when about to be given up to the enemy by the treachery of a Rajah, in one of the northern Circars.

Every word Miss Clavering uttered inflicted a fresh pang upon Honoria. What a heart she had refused! and how refused! — without the tribute of a moment's consideration — unfeelingly! — unmercifully! — ungratefully!

As Miss Clavering lamented that something had hurried her away the night they met at Arthur's Court, ere Captain Fitz Arthur could introduce them mutu-

ally, Honoria thought there was emotion in the sweet blue eye resting on hers ; as if Miss Clavering sought to discover whether Fitz Arthur's friendship for her, and from her, were more than friendship.

Mrs. Shafto's assertions about her young kinsman and Miss Clavering, then shot through her mind, throwing her into a confusion of thought, in which the images of Miss Clavering and her first lover, whoever he might be ; of Mr. Mulcaster and Lady Catherine Eustace ; of herself with Lord Francis, and his forgotten affection, — were strangely and painfully mingled. First loves, — nay, any loves did not appear so everlasting to her now, as she had once fancied them ; and she certainly felt something like disdain for hearts too easily consoled.

That Miss Clavering was consoled by something, or somebody, she could not forbear imagining ; for though that young lady's lily cheek was yet only tinted with the faint bloom of the wilding rose ; her eyes had less of that dim sweetness, and downcast thoughtfulness, which

distinguished them at Arthur's Court. They still told of past suffering, struggle, sacrifice ; but Honoria thought she saw in them now, the dawn of happier expressions.

Miss Clavering, however, was still distressingly interesting, from her appearance of extremely delicate health ; her complexion varied remarkably, while speaking or listening : and once or twice the shortness and fluttering of her breath prevented her from finishing a sentence. She confessed, indeed, that she had been dangerously ill, almost immediately after her last visit to Northumberland.

Miss Mulcaster being a florist, as well as Lady Henderson, and Colonel Mason being anything they willed him to be, nay, admirably unhinging himself to move garden pots at their command, forgot time so entirely, that they did not return to the hermitage till an hour had been dawdled away.

Neither Mr. Mulcaster, nor Dora Clavering, nor one of the children were there. With the apprehension of a mother,

and the propriety of a matron, Lady Henderson instantly thought of accidents to heads and hearts ; there was a river for her children to fall into, and a very handsome young man for the youthful Dora to fall in love with—she went directly in search of the runaways.

A quarter of a mile from the spot she had left, she met the truants leisurely returning ; William, with a child in each arm ; Dora with the smallest one weighing down both hers ; the eldest boy galloping on a stick before them.

The glow and brightness of all the young faces, gave undeniable proof of the good effects produced by air, exercise, and awakened spirits. Nothing produces such quick intimacy between two very young persons, as mirthful sport enjoyed together ; and no aid to this, is half so certain and agreeable as romping with children. Some ladies are even suspected of making such romping, enter into their rules for effective coquetry.

Perhaps Miss Dora Clavering was an incipient coquette ; though, I must do

her the justice to say, that only with the girlish animation of seventeen, had she been laughing, running, struggling against little Edward Henderson. An arch look and a playful tone were suddenly quenched, as Lady Henderson came in sight. Dora was directly conscious that she had allowed her spirits to run away with her ; and that, she knew, in the eyes of awful Chaperons, was the next offence to letting the sharer in her fault run off with her own proper person.

She slackened her steps unconsciously, though not unmarked by her companion ; while Edward leaping upon his mamma, told her they had been to see his rabbits at the farm, and Fanny's Guinea-pigs, and the big dog, &c. and Mr. Mulcaster had carried Fanny and George all the way ; and Miss Clavering had been carrying Eliza ever so far, after Mr. Mulcaster was obliged to take up George.

As Lady Henderson reached the principal culprits, she could not forbear saying with a heightened colour, though a tone of pleasantry ! “ Well, Miss Clavering,

I hope you and Mr. Mulcaster have had a sufficiently long flirtation?"

"Tolerable for a beginning, if you choose to call it one," was the fair offender's reply, attempting to receive it as a jest, or to brave it out as a censure; but her nature was too soft and ingenuous for her attempt to succeed; and William Mulcaster saw with pleasure and surprise a blush mantle her cheek, and tears crowd into her eye. An air of embarrassment and distress altered her step, as well as her countenance:—she hung back from him and from her accuser.

Nothing is so pernicious to a man's peace, provided he have one spark of generous feeling in his nature, than to behold himself the cause of blame and shame, to an innocent and charming person of the other sex. The moment in which Lady Henderson uttered this implied rebuke, or rather, the moment he observed a tear, about *him*, in Dora Clavering's lovely eye, he vowed himself hers for ever and ever.

In consequence of so notable a resolu-

tion, he now put himself forward as her protector, with various excuses and apologies; scrupling not, I grieve to own, to colour his own solicitations of being shown all the sights at the farm, and Miss Dora Clavering's very reluctant style of obliging him, far more highly than a court of justice would have received as evidence. Let it be remembered that William Mulcaster had been at our great public school, where it is said, false evidence in favour of audacious disobedience, is considered a point of honour. When these erring lawgivers get rid of such a notion, and how they do so in after life, I cannot guess; certes they do, or where should we hope to find our true and honourable men?

Dora herself interrupted him; though crimson to her very temples. "No, no, Mr. Mulcaster," she cried. "You shall not be so over good-natured. I confess the fault was all mine. That laughing race after Edward and my guitar, had raised my foolish spirits; and when once they set off with me, I know they carry me

beyond all bounds. I ought to have remembered that Lady Henderson would be frightened about the dear children."

William was not flattered by this silence on the implied impropriety of her spending all that time in his company : but a glance just tinged with artless archness, directed at him through the shade of her long ringlets, made up for the omission ; and he could look with meritorious complacency upon Lady Henderson's really amiable smile of instant pardon.

A mother with her children safe and joyous round her, after recent alarm about them, is soon appeased ; and back the whole party returned in perfect amity, to regain William's hat. It was found lying on the mossy step of the hermitage. After which they followed the slow progress of Colonel Mason and the other two ladies into the house.

Sir John was now at home, and visible in the sitting-room ; but Colonel Mason had not completed half his round of enquiry after other ladies who had graced his *déjeûné*, and he departed.

Sir John was a great cattle breeder; and finding Mr. Mulcaster had been to the farm, he directly endowed him with some of his own skill; producing the portrait of a great Lincolnshire ox, about to be exhibited in London. Lady Henderson had a new and splendid volume of botanical prints to show Miss Mulcaster; little Edward had a whole review of tin soldiers, horse and foot, to display and manœuvre upon a table: — and Mr. Mulcaster, suddenly gifted with learning in all its branches, or else with a laudable desire of being instructed, had ears and eyes at the service of all his teachers.

Honoria, almost laughingly, suspected that the said ears and eyes were capable of a fourth employment, much more agreeable to their possessor. For though Dora Clavering did not testify as vehement an interest in any play save that of the children, she somehow got the benefit of all William's deep observations and fervent admiration: — and his “How lovely!” — “What a celestial blue!” — “Yes—nothing is so beautiful as the lily!”

—exclaimed over the botanical book; interwoven with responsive plaudits of Sir John's described new ploughs, and prize oxen, were uttered in the tone with which he might have worshipped a mistress.

“Versatile man! versatile man!” — Honoria exclaimed to herself, sighing over this imagined infirmity of human nature.

The hall clock, by its audible beat of four, brought the blood into William's cheeks. “Sir John,” he exclaimed, “why don't you ask us if we have not brought our nightcaps in our pockets!”

“But that would not do, if you had,” replied the pleased Sir John; “unless the ladies have brought their gowns too. You remember, that four at least from your house dine here, Miss O'Hara inclusive. You and I will have another touch at the question about grass-feeding and oil-cake.”

“By way of excusing myself for such a visitation of a visit,” returned William, “I should imply that I forgot it. But

that would not tell ; since of all engagements here, I should be least likely to forget one for to-day." (And he bowed adroitly in the direction of the eldest Miss Clavering.) "It's all the fault of your boy, and your bullocks, Sir John."

In very simplicity of an honest man's heart, which had never known a strong wish till it felt the fervent one of a parent, and the ambition of a grazier, did the plain-minded Baronet give him a cordial shake of the hand ; while William, reminding his sister and Honoria, that "awful beauty had yet to put on all its charms," and that they had to ride back to St. Cuthberts, and return "new-tricked" to Monksden by six of the clock," snatched up a myrtle-sprig Dora Clavering had let fall, and hurried away, with a sweeping bow, to the circle.

That he was canvassed, person, fortune, character, and connexions, may be supposed : his flirtation with Lady Catherine Eustace was, of course, not unwisely or unkindly dwelt on by Lady Henderson, though it was fairly repre-

sented. Holding herself responsible for all things lost in her house, that Lady felt some wholesome apprehensions, from the extreme youth and inexperience of her pretty visitor; and retailing the conjectures of lookers-on at William's conduct the day before, insinuated, though with reluctant good-nature, that Mr. Mulcaster, in spite of his engaging countenance and manner, *might* be a heartless, conquest-seeking young man.

This insinuation was deserved justice: and had the Dean been privy to it, he would have said, "Thus doth the stone he throweth, break a man's own pate." Sir John took up Mr. Mulcaster's defence, (for he was not in the secret of his truantry with the fair Dora,) and what with his predictions that their young neighbour would soon, with a little instruction, come at a good judgment in cattle; what with the children's artless repetitions of Mr. Mulcaster's kindness to them, and care of them; and above all, from Dora Clavering's seemingly careless silence while the discussion was

going on, Lady Henderson's fears were fairly dislodged.

On the road to St. Cuthberts, and after an arrival there, conversation could not be abundant amongst persons who had to dress, and go four miles to dinner in less than an hour and a half. Yet, during their rapid ride, Honoria described her interesting *tête à tête* with Miss Clavering; leaving the eulogium of her yet lovelier sister to Mr. Mulcaster. William, however, contented himself with calling the youngest "a pretty girl enough;" branching out into florid commendations of the elder's retiring grace, and speculating upon the extent of her fortune; puzzling Honoria to guess whether this indifference to the one, and admiration of the other, were affected; or whether he were indeed going to corrupt himself into a heartless, mercenary man of the world.

The injurious thought outlived not a second glance at his ingenuous countenance. That he was a wayward, spoiled boy, but good withal, she well knew;

—that he was affectionate, and most tenderly compassionate, even of brute-suffering, she knew also ; —that he had lived in a domestic atmosphere of cheerful piety, and active benevolence, she was as sure of. Such a creature, then, could not, on such slight provocation as the conduct of a coquette, yield to base and cold passions.

When Honoria had reached her own room, and began to arrange her hair, she ceased to think of aught except the persons she was most anxious to meet at Monksden. She imagined every possible mode of reception by Sir Everard Fitz Arthur, and every sort of distress from his son's obvious misery. She believed herself prepared for both causes of agitation. Sir Everard would be distant at first, or he would say something hot and hasty ; but she would show him, by her sweetness and submission, that she felt conscious of deserving displeasure : and Delaval would avoid her at first ; — but he would look at nothing but her ; — and surely he would read at last, in her

countenance, and by her coldness to Lord Francis Fitz James, that she — that she, — what? — Honoria did not answer herself: — she knew not — would not know — what she felt her looks and conduct were to whisper to a lover's heart. Yet, if neither Sir Everard nor his son should keep their engagement with Sir John Henderson? — Such a disappointment was impossible. Honoria's earliest notions of *the tyrant passion*, assured her, that a drowning wretch may as easily think of escaping the whirlpool by which he is sucked in, as a man in love retreat voluntarily from the presence of the woman he prefers. She believed herself too sure of her power over that devoted heart to doubt his ardent renewal of the suit, so rashly urged by Sir Everard, whenever lucky accident should bring them into the same scene. In such alternations of hope and fear, distress and expectation, she remained where she was, till summoned to the carriage, where she found the Dean, Jane, and William.

During the drive to Monksden, Jane kept smiling, and trying to look as if she had not been simple enough to weep violently at Stanhope's departure for five or six days. William sought to make her laugh by various ludicrous sallies, for he was in his most joyous mood ; giving way now and then, somewhat reluctantly, to his father's better-governed pleasantries. "Do you know who we are to meet?" asked the Dean, as they came in sight of Monksden's ivy-covered gables, venerable pinnacles, and overhanging windows.

"Our friends from Arthur's Court," was the answer. "Some of the party from Ravenshaw, Mr. Meredith, I am glad to say, and an officer or two ; ourselves, of course, and the Monksden family."

"I am curious to see this boasted heiress of Mrs. Branspeth's," resumed the Dean ; "for they tell me she is expected to bestow herself upon her young executor. Old Stapleton told it me, amongst other gossip, before breakfast, and I heard it afterwards at Ravenshaw ; where,

by the way, Master William, I went to pay my compliments to your Lord Francis, this morning ; and as Sir John Henderson, who was present, did not contradict it, nay, indeed, gave it a very satisfactory degree of credit, I must say the report pleases me vastly ; for Aycliffe Castle could not fall into nobler hands. A better son, better brother, better man, than Delaval Fitz Arthur, I really think exists not in this world of imperfect goodness. To bear him this testimony requires no small virtue in myself," added the good divine in his usual jocular tone, "since I owe him a grudge for not choosing one of my girls. But I cry you mercy, Miss O'Hara, the gentleman was said to be *your* property, I think."

Honorias forced laugh might have vied with that of her friend's lover, at this ill-timed remark ; no one guessed the true cause of her obvious embarrassment ; and Jane believing herself quite sure of her sentiments, and being now warmly enlisted on the side of Lord Francis Fitz James, besought her father not to bring

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up old grievances ; declaring her conviction that Delaval Fitz Arthur was too sensible not to have seen long ago that he never could succeed with Miss O'Hara, and that consequently he would be the more ready to become attached to such a charming person as Miss Clavering. For her part, she hoped to see her dear friend make a far more brilliant match, than one even with Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's heir.

"The saints of Rome defend me, child!" exclaimed the mocking Dean. "So, so! now you have caught the son of a peer, nothing will serve you for your friend, under a title! My poor William! he must put up with the dairy-maid, of course, unless he can get knighted."

Jane betook herself to defences and explanations, which her father mercilessly defeated at every point ; whilst Honoria sat thrilling between false shame and bitterness of regret ; conscious as she was, of less indifference to Fitz Arthur's possible transfer of affection than Jane imagined ; yet, aware that such transfer

was likely enough to follow her rejection of his suit, and to grow out of a similar state of feeling, in two tender hearts.

They reached Monksden: bells sounded; doors flew open; variously liveried servants gave way, as the ladies hurried through the entrance-hall. Honoria saw not the coats of olive green and silver, which she looked for; but it was not half past five yet, and Sir Everard never came to a dinner a moment too soon or too late.

All the party except those from Ravenshaw and Arthur's Court were assembled in the large tapestry-hung drawing-room. As the season for fires was over, and a rallying point wanting, the different personages were scattered about its windows, by flower-stands, before book-cases, turning over portfolios, as their ordinary habits prompted. After the ceremonial of entrance Honoria naturally sprang to her uncle, whose mild aspect brightened at the grasp of her affectionate hand, and who immediately beginning to give her those little details which accumulate unaccountably, whenever we go but for

two days from home, gave timely diversion to her thoughts. Mr. Mulcaster found his attraction in one of the deeply embayed windows, which, nearly darkened by the loosened tresses of a redundant clematis waving off from the outward wall, offered a romantic screen for encouraging looks and blushes, if any such awaited him there.

Jane Mulcaster's ear was taken possession of by Colonel Mason, in right of his profession; Major Stanhope being off duty. Not that Colonel Mason whispered compliments and acknowledgments; on the contrary he spoke as he would have given the word of command; laudably desirous that no one should remain ignorant of his last new gorget-roses, being manufactured by his fair companion's fair hand, and that the riband which wound down his long military queue, was a sash from the waist of her gay sister Sophia.

As Colonel Mason neither sought nor obtained higher favours from contending beauties than little *cadeaux* like these,

the ladies' admirers could exclaim with admirable self-possession, that they were transported out of themselves with envy; an avowal at which the gallant Colonel ever smiled complacently.

The Dean at first made a tour from person to person, then settled himself beside Miss Clavering, with whom he entered into conversation.

Mr. Meredith's voice was so low, and slow, habitually, that his niece while listening to him, could not help catching much of the dialogue passing between the loiterers in the window.

Mr. Mulcaster must have been boasting his possession of the myrtle-sprig picked up in the morning, for Dora Clavering was saying with pretty contempt, "O, I am not in the least surprised at your care of it; I heard your character this morning; I know you were born with a flower in your breast."

"Not so, fair lady!" was the propitiatory answer, and not exactly in the speaker's usual tone: "but I shall die with one there."

Whether the fair lady thought this expression too bold upon a mere day's acquaintance, gaily as it was endeavoured to be uttered; or that she had met a warning look from her sister; or that she felt some warning was needful; or that she had really glimpsed her own sprig of myrtle sentimentally concealed within the breast of her admirer's coat, it is hopeless to enquire. Perhaps all those reasons combined, made her at once shoot from his sphere, and fly into that of his father and her sister. The forlorn admirer was left to gaze through the blind of clematis.

"A noble prospect from that window, William!" observed the Dean, aloud.

"A charming one, sir!" too hastily responded William, nevertheless turning away from it.

"I give you joy of your rare faculty of vision!" William was happily obtuse at that moment, and did not catch the jest; which, however, called an instant blush into the cheeks of Dora.

"These good folks are using us very ill!" said the master of the house, as five

minutes stole after five minutes. "I wish every body was as punctual as my unfortunate appetite. When a man is in the habit of riding about for hours amongst his fat sheep, he's devilish glad to meet them in the shape of mutton at his table." This brilliant sally was terribly against the conversion of Mr. Mulcaster into a *grazing* country gentleman; — he looked abhorrent of the worthy Baronet.

Sir John resumed: "But I suppose we ought not to have expected my Lord Francis Fitz James till an hour after the time named. Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's delay surprises me the most."

"But may not His Lordship's fashionable companion be in fault?" asked Mr. Meredith, trying to divide blame. "I think you said none of the other party there can come."

"The gentlemen were summoned this afternoon by an express to a Cabinet Council;" was Sir John's reply. "And Lady Haverford has played us false; she don't come."

"Not come!" was echoed by most of

the persons present, with immediate disappointment.

Lady Henderson was then called upon to speak for her old friend; and she laughingly said, that she never expected Lady Haverford to keep any engagement; for every place she went to, she was carried off to! this was the case now. The Hexham Castle party were gone to witness a sailing-match on one of the Cumberland Lakes, and they had taken Lady Haverford captive, and they had merely allowed her to write a note to that effect from their house, — and her fine maid and their fine footman had forgotten it; so that it only reached Monksden an hour ago. It was full of regret and lamentation; but Lady Haverford knew she could help on, a liking of Lord Frederick Brisco, for Lady Ann Bowes; and it would be but good-natured. In short, Lady Haverford evidently played everybody's cards for them, and left her own hand to be pillaged.

And this was the fondling friend who had squeezed both Honoria's hands only

two days before, as if her whole soul were in the pressure, conjuring her not to break their engagement of meeting at Monksden! — this, then, was *the world!* or rather, this was the consequence of a gracious spirit letting itself grasp at too many prizes. What folly, to quit the dear small circle of home, and home's neighbourhood, for a shoreless sea of never-limiting acquaintance; a sea into which ten thousand streams must be ever pouring new tides!

The scales were beginning to fall from Honoria's mental eye, showing as they did so actual charms, where formerly she had fancied only ordinary qualities. She drew towards Jane Mulcaster, and by her side appeared to listen to Colonel Mason's elaborate explanation of garrison duty. Jane bent to her ear, "My Honor, what a warning that Lady Haverford is to me! I was just as likely to let myself be a prey to people, as she is; but now I shall be for ever on my guard." Honoria's eye-beam noticed this amiable candour, and turning towards Colonel Mason she

seemed to invite the continuance of his harangue. He did continue, but she only seemed attending ; for, as the moments passed, certain distressing apprehensions began to darken over her : there was no arrival from Arthur's Court. Sir Everard and his son were evidently not coming : the one was too indignant, the other too wretched ; or Fitz Arthur was seriously ill. She had heard him say that mental suffering brought on the complaint he had contracted in India, and she knew that inflammation of the liver was often fatal. Not aware that such a disease did not attack with the suddenness of a fit, she yielded to a perfect agony of remorse and alarm.

Dora Clavering had by this time usurped her sister's share of the Dean's conversation, winning him exclusively to herself, by a pretty mixture of blushing girlishness and arch intelligence, half pleasing, half provoking William, who stood by, wholly deposed, vainly trying to obtain one word, one glance from the little tyrant.

Miss Clavering, Honoria thought, was like herself endeavouring to fortify her spirits against the disappointment of Captain Fitz Arthur's company ; for she sat pale and thoughtful, starting when a door opened or even a chair was moved.

Sir John, now watch in hand, seemed bent upon considering Lord Francis as the only culprit on the present occasion ; for he kept explaining how His Lordship happened to be invited : simply by Lady Henderson at the officers' breakfast, on Lady Haverford's suggestion ; he, Sir John, not knowing him but in the most distant way. And how Sir John had ridden over to Ravenshaw the moment Lord Wearmouth's apology arrived, to give Lord Francis an opportunity of backing out of the dinner ; (the Dean, who was present, could bear him witness ;) but that the gentleman seemed so civilly bent upon keeping the engagement, especially after he heard who was expected, (bowing significantly and most remarkably to Honoria,) that it was impossible for Sir John to go on pressing

him *not* to come: to make dinner wait after all this, was really very uncivil.

Mr. Mulcaster stood forth as his friend's champion, advocating his cause with a zeal which did not seem so palatable to the hungry Baronet as his dinner in prospect. Finding every alleged reason of horse lame, postilion drunk, clocks varying, quite ineffectual, he was deliberately proceeding to break his friend's neck by way of saving his character, when wheels were heard: the next moment the house-bell rang.

Some hearts beat in the room, and out of the room, as the long suite of receiving-rooms were traversing. The butler announced Lord Francis Fitz James, and Mr. Fitz Arthur.

Honoria had no leisure for looking at Miss Clavering; too agitated, too disordered herself, sick nearly to fainting, and wishing she could escape from every eye, even from that she had just pined to meet, she turned unconsciously towards Mr. Mulcaster. He exclaimed at her white cheeks. "My head-ache again,"

she said, half choking with struggle against her emotion.

“ You are faint from fasting too long ; and so is Miss Clavering I see. Confound these fellows for keeping dinner.”

Dora Clavering, as solicitous about her sister, as William kindly was for Honoria, concealed her sister's face by bending over her with a whispered expression of uneasiness. No one, therefore, observed the momentary indisposition of both the young ladies ; and a moment after, when Fitz Arthur went up to Miss Clavering, her cheeks suffused with intense, though as quickly fading colour.

Honoria's now became a fixed crimson. To her disappointed eye, Fitz Arthur appeared as little like a man deprived of hope and happiness, as Mr. Mulcaster had done the day after Lady Catherine Eustace's new engagement was declared. He was death pale it is true ; but he was calm. He spoke in *almost* his usual tone of voice ; and he gave rational answers : he neither looked wildly, nor raved, nor stood entranced. Disappointment would

not kill him — no — he would live and marry Miss Clavering. What a dupe, Honoria then thought she was, to have made herself so miserable, to have troubled herself by such penitence for refusing a man who cared so little for refusal!

How difficult it is for any mind, (much less that of an inexperienced girl,) to rid itself of strong and early prejudices!

Honoria accustomed by her studies, and her seclusion from the world at large, to think of human passions in their original state, failed to recognise them under the decent clothing of civilized discipline; and because the natural impulse of extreme suffering is to give a loose to cries and entreaties, she expected that however inferior emotions might be restrained by society, the over-mastering one of love must spurn disguise, and forget appearances. Whether she did really expect to behold the rejected Fitz Arthur publicly exhibiting the agony of despair, or merely reckoned upon his presenting himself as a breathing corpse at a mixed dinner, I pretend not to say. She cer-

tainly looked for something different from what she saw ; and as she looked, pride and delicacy restored all her bloom, all her beauty, while turning at the silver and subdued tone of Lord Francis Fitz James's voice, to meet his eye of deeply interesting expression.

As Fitz Arthur was almost inarticulately saying that a sudden indisposition of his father had detained him till it was quite over, Honoria heard Lord Francis apologizing to Lady Henderson for his late arrival, by owning that he had been much disturbed that day by a matter of private concernment which kept him from properly noticing the hour. She read in his mode of entrance, more emotion than he acknowledged : sometimes his fine dark brows were bent with an impatience of sufferance ; sometimes expanded with disdainful, nay, irritable expression.

Having merely bowed generally to the company, as Lady Henderson named them, His Lordship, regardless of the sister lilies and the rose-like Jane, sat speaking actual nothings to Honoria ;

but in such low tones, and with such a bending air of solicitous observation, that more than one of the lookers-on gave him credit for flattering motives.

Honorina herself rashly deciding that Delaval Fitz Arthur was come thither not to excite her pity, but to show he scorned it, proudly endeavoured to testify her indifference in return, and for this purpose gave exclusive attention to her companion.

Never was human heart more cruelly wronged by such a judgment than his whom she pierced. Never had long-enduring heart such bitter anguish locked up in it! The disappointment of fondly cherished hopes, only the dearer because they had been nursed like sickly infants into unlooked-for health and promise; — a keener disappointment in the character of her he loved; — the pang of knowing, that if he would rescue her from his offended father's aversion, he must feign an ease he did not feel, and carry his bleeding heart's wound, as he now did, unstaunched, though unseen, into society,

where he must see or hear of her continually.

Those only who have loved something, far beyond the bright eye and blooming cheek, can tell what his anguish was, while looking on Honoria now. Honoria had rejected his hand, generously offered for him by his father; she had done it proudly, unhesitatingly; her own previous observation must have shown her how his earthly hopes were bound up in her; yet here she was, bright, blooming, happy, smiling upon a man she had known only since yesterday!—What then excused her? She must have been already captivated by the brilliant reputation and situation of Lord Francis; and now finding his person and manner please her, and conscious of charming him, she was yielding, without self-scrutiny, to the temptation of securing his heart, though at the cost of many a pang to him who loved her too, and looked on.

Impressed with this obvious notion, Fitz Arthur, in “sorrow rather than an-

ger," refused himself the indulgence of directing one pleading or passionate glance towards her : his griefs should not disturb the enchantment of love's sweetest moment. He kept his resolution ; yet could he not refrain from sending an anxious look that way, as he noted the sparkle of Honoria's eyes, and the more dangerous alternations of cloud and light in the deep-set orbs of Lord Francis.

Fitz Arthur, like Honoria herself, was misled by his own distraction of spirit ; and when he was heard to say to Miss Clavering, that nothing but a particular anxiety to see her just then, could have brought him from his father, there were some by who misjudged him. Miss Clavering assuredly blushed, and looked down. Dinner was at length said to be served, and the expecting party transferred themselves to the eating-hall.

Heraldic regulations placed Lord Francis Fitz James at the right hand of Lady Henderson ; the Dean whispering that he did not like to play church and state,

and glancing at his lordly-looking Lordship, yielded the left hand of their obliging hostess to the heir of Arthur's Court.

By this arrangement, Miss Clavering sat next Fitz Arthur, and the Dean between her and her sister, with Mr. Meredith flanking them. Mr. Mulcaster, to his extreme vexation, by this mischievous trick of his father's, was placed *vis à vis* to Mr. Meredith, and next to Honoria; whom the same etiquette placed below Jane Mulcaster. Colonel Mason, and Lord Francis, were Jane's supporters. Sir John Henderson, of course, presided at the lower end of his table.

All the component parts of this dinner party were agreeable in their own way, and most of them, on former occasions, had mixed up delightfully: but there was "a little leaven" somewhere, that spoiled the whole mass. Conversation flagged; faces grew long, or grew red; and poor Lady Henderson, who had reckoned upon giving a brilliant dinner,

was obliged to hope she was giving an interesting one ; and that one or two happy unions for life might grow out of its evident restraint and embarrassment.

Those who cared the least for what they were eating, talked of nothing else, absolutely discussing the merits of some dish, over and over again ; and the eyes that would fain have fixed on objects opposite to them, seemed magnanimously resolute to look only on their next neighbour.

Jane Mulcaster's heart was in a hack-chaise with four posters, on the high London road ; so that she gave but half her usual smiles to Colonel Mason's kindly chit-chat ; and but half an ear to Lord Francis Fitz James's incessant observations upon the breakfast of yesterday, and the dinner of to-day. Miss Clavering appeared so much engrossed by her expressed anxiety about Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's indisposition, as to express it with a confusion that savoured strongly of a livelier interest in his son.

Honorina, however, was conspicuously

animated; yet even William Mulcaster thought he had never seen her show so much vivacity in herself, without exciting it in others: in truth, she looked wildly gay, but said nothing really sportive. Dora Clavering, too — she was not what she had been in the morning: he might have flattered himself that she would have been more amusing had he been her target at hand to shoot wit at; but seeing her glance continually at Fitz Arthur and her sister, he did her the justice of believing that she was watching their smothered dialogue.

To obtain an instant's notice he was at length driven to the desperate expedient of sending round his plate to Miss Dora Clavering for some of her dish; meaning, the one she was expected to help. "My son would as lieve eat rat as duck;" said the Dean, affecting a fear of being overheard: "so, of course, this is to put in his pocket for his collection."

With unfeigned astonishment, the fair Dora enquired what was meant.

"O, he collects ladies' gifts, from a

riband to a rope ; from the dust off their shoes, to the powder out of their hair. I cannot say he has ever admitted me to a sight of this pretty collection, but I hope to outlive him to see it ; and I hear from his sisters, that it is as multifarious and interesting as Cox's Museum itself. I think they tell me he has a quarter cask of rose leaves alone."

Dora, for the first time, sent a beam of her blue eye in the direction of William, with most provoking disdainfulness : he would rather have heard her ask his father, if there were no myrtle-sprigs amongst the rose leaves. His face grew scarlet ; and, had he dared, he would have given no very temperate retort to the Dean's mockery.

But fathers, like princes, may wield wit at will : woe be to son or subject who presumes to parry the stroke !

Dora Clavering was perseveringly unkind, as he kept calling her manner to him in his own thoughts : so he decided that even Lady Henderson must be quite satisfied with her contempt of him.

Certain hints given by the fair Dora, in the window, before dinner, made him devoutly wish that he never had heard the name of Lady Catherine Eustace; or never been such an idiot as to *play* at being in love with her. But he was now properly punished; both for that boyish folly, and the graver offence of trying to ward off undeserved ridicule, by appearing to have caused Lady Catherine's infidelity by his previous indifference.

The dinner went off too heavily to be long detained: and the ladies, barely looking at the wine during dessert, very soon left the gentlemen to become more agreeable or disagreeable than they had hitherto been to each other.

The presence of playful children in the drawing-room, afforded opportunities for dissipating uneasy feelings, if that were wished, or of concealing their continuance.

Miss Clavering, being professedly an invalid still, went to a sofa at some distance from the pretty little creatures, who

were calling upon every one to join their hide-and-seek. Dora instantly followed her thither, with that anxious tenderness which attracts tenderness to itself; seeming, by the expression of her sweetly pleading eyes, to be urging her sister to something she was slow to grant.

When Honoria found the entreaty to be, that she would retire from the company, and spare herself further exhaustion of spirits, she thought she could guess why Miss Clavering was loth to quit the party ere the gentlemen joined them: — Fitz Arthur was one of them! Lady Henderson joined her persuasions to those of Dora; and Miss Clavering then said, that if she were not better after coffee, she would retire without further warning.

Meanwhile, Sir John Henderson finding his best wines stranded in a manner, whenever they voyaged to that end of the table, where Fitz Arthur and Lord Francis sat in unsocial silence, and discovering that something had suddenly taken from Mr. Mulcaster his promising

capacities of the morning, at once shuffled up his own accurate details of a Woburn meeting, and His Grace of Bedford's able conduct at the head of it, and conducted his guests to the ladies.

Sir John entered his own drawing-room with the secret opinion, that my Lord Francis Fitz James, instead of being the insinuating, interesting, eloquent personage, described by common fame, was one of the most supercilious, coldest, and most taciturn, he had ever been so unlucky as to entertain at Monksden.

In the drawing-room, however, Lord Francis redeemed part of his character. With his alleged caprice he seemed all at once to rouse into the determination of being delightful; for drawing towards Mr. Meredith, from whom he had been removed at dinner, he entered at once into a conversation, which, embracing subjects connected with all Mr. Meredith's tastes and studies, drew forth the graces of the Rector's mind, while they afforded display for the best powers of his companion.

Honoraria, both from pride and delicacy, shunning Fitz Arthur, yet not ill-inclined to show him her indifference to another's attraction, turned from an inviting movement of her uncle's hand, and glided up to a music-stand, where Dora Clavering was now seeking a book of German airs.

William Mulcaster, in brave defiance of his father's bantering eye, and her scornful one, was humbly entreating to be employed. "You look very unhappy just now, Mr. Mulcaster," said Honoraria, forcing herself to say some nothings. "What affects you?"

"The utter impossibility of pleasing this fair lady," he returned, in a tone of levity to sanction such an avowal, coupled with looks that spoke more seriously. "She finds fault with every thing about me, even to my name: and that she should not prefer *my* name to her own, you will grant, is quite enough to drive me to despair."

A glance at Dora explained the reason for such despair. The young lady put up her pretty lip without looking at him, though her cheeks suffused. "Wil-

liam!" she repeated at last; "William! must I own, it is a foolish-sounding name in my opinion?"

"If it be only his Christian name you object to," observed Honoria, humouring their harmless *badinage*, "I fancy his despair will cease."

"Miss O'Hara, you are angel-tongued!" rejoined the enraptured gentleman. "But even William is not to be scoffed at. Some of the world's greatest men have borne it: William Wallace, William Shakspeare, William Tell, William of Nassau, William Pitt, — (scores more, if I could remember them,) — and it may belong to one of the happiest, at Miss Dora Clavering's pleasure. Permitteth she me to say as much?"

"Honest friend!" cried Dora, trying to be more slightly familiar as she became really more embarrassed. "I permit thee to talk any nonsense best suited to thy small sense. Since 'it goes by me like the idle wind which I respect not.' Miss O'Hara, does he never tire you with his bombast?"

Honoria's thoughts were gone from

them at that moment ; and, not answering, William had scope for re-urging his suit of being employed, during her stay at Monksden, as Miss Dora's slave. Enlarging upon his own qualities of fidelity and devotedness, and admirable power of fetching and carrying like a dog, letter, message, packet, or parcel, or whatever else she would condescend to honour him with : — vouching for his own trustworthiness, with all the unction of self-love.

“ I do not doubt your power of bringing me many testimonials from former employers ;” Dora said, wickedly. “ I suspect all the young ladies of the county are enabled to give you a character for ——”

“ For what ?” asked William, surprised into a tone of anxiety, from the interest betrayed by Dora's accusations.

“ For playing the servant to-day, — and the master to-morrow, — and the deserter the next day. Poor Lady Catherine ! — O Mr. Mulcaster !” The last words were uttered with instant and laughing archness, as if the speaker were

in haste to obliterate the memory of the half-vexed tone that had preceded them: and having found the music she was seeking, away she flew to a piano-forte. Honoria's eyes falling upon William Mulcaster at that moment, saw an expression of such sincere contrition and pain in his countenance, that she inwardly determined to do him the good turn of placing his past conduct in a fairer light than, it was evident, Dora now considered it under: and as he started sighing away, her returning eyes saw with the same glance, that Lord Francis Fitz James was close by her, and Fitz Arthur looking at her from a remoter place.

Both circumstances contributed their share in her instantaneous blush. Even that blush was mistaken: and the distant eyes, which had been hanging on her with fond and wishful gaze, almost kindling into hope from her voluntary desertion of her gifted countryman, averted, at once, sadly, resolutely.

When Honoria glanced at Fitz Arthur

again, he was at the whist-table with Sir John, Lady Henderson, and Colonel Mason.

But the expression of his eyes had re-animated her heart; and with thrilling incapacity to move, she appeared willingly engaged by Lord Francis, while in reality thinking solely of Fitz Arthur.

“Studying the heavens, Miss O’Hara?” questioned Lord Francis, in a melancholy tone. “Are you fancying the nature of those cherubim-stars fluttering their golden wings in yon deep blue sky? or are you lost, as I am sometimes, in tracing the labyrinth of the human heart;—our own, ever the most intricate!”

“That is a study which, I fear, conduces little to our happiness:” replied Honoria, with an involuntary sigh; then correcting her hasty remark, added, “at least, to our happiness in this world.”

Lord Francis sighed too, and more heavily than she had done, becoming all at once silent. Honoria would have escaped from him during his trance of thought, had he not suddenly roused,

and with an air at once smiling and respectful, reminded her of their meeting on May-day. At this address, suspicious colour again overspread her cheeks, though no longer accompanied by the fantastic half-wishes which had directly followed the romantic rencontre alluded to. Lord Francis went on to ask, if he might be permitted to bring the lost slipper to her, ere he left Northumberland, which would be in a day or two.

There was something in this question so contradictory, that Honoria was embarrassed how to answer. Lord Francis evidently seemed to admire her; but admiration was not a serious sentiment. In offering to return, what gallantry might have sanctioned him in retaining, and liking would have wished to treasure, he was obviously showing that he meant not to be understood as her admirer: yet his renewed attentions to her, his marked distinction of her uncle, and his endeavour to fasten the honour of his visit at St. Cuthberts upon her principally, troubled her with an apprehension of doing wrong.

How was she to steer between the two odiums of egregious vanity, or of disgraceful eagerness, to secure a conquest? In some confusion, she requested Lord Francis would give his friend Mr. Mulcaster the pleasure of bringing the little shoe back to its forlorn partner, as no one had such friendly alacrity in executing a commission. At the mention of his own name, the person in question added himself to their party; but Honoria was retreating from it; and leaving him to amuse or annoy Lord Francis, she succeeded in obtaining the opportunity she sought, of clearing William's character in the opinion of Dora Clavering.

Both justice and friendship had their share in this good-natured explanation: for Honoria sincerely believed all she said in William's commendation; and she regarded him with too much cordiality to bear the signs of his distress and mortification, without trying something for his relief.

During Honoria's short dialogue with Lord Francis, Fitz Arthur's eyes once

more were guilty of turning towards them. The soft emotions which had succeeded on her countenance to the sparkling pride of her first appearance, seemed to declare that her inexperienced heart was yielding to the flattering particularity of her companion ; of that Lord Francis Fitz James, who, too probably, would take her heart and throw it by, or leave it where it was laid, unconscious of its abandonment to him !

With a pang of generous anguish, since it had comparatively little of self in it, Fitz Arthur looked away again, vainly trying to recover a sense of what he was about. Luckily he played against Sir John Henderson ; and as the winning party ever find mercy for a loser's faults, Fitz Arthur's mistakes and misdeal passed without rebukes.

Jane Mulcaster was now seated at the instrument, kindly obedient to her father's desire, that she would sing. Jane had little voice, and not much execution ; she could just please with a cheerful song : but her happy imagination, and now hap-

pier feelings, did not qualify her to touch the heart by a pathetic one, and she was therefore unlucky in her present choice. With a smile conscious of feelings, far remote from those she was giving musical breath to, she warbled forth in tones suited for Euphrosyne, —

“Thou ne’er shalt know the bitter tears
That I have shed for thee !
Thou ne’er shalt know the sunless years
Which slow must pass to their dark biers,
Ere struggling set me free !

“The worship fond, these eyes have paid,
Of love in secret borne ;
Shall that, by agony betray’d,
At cold derision’s foot be laid,
For trampling, and for scorn !

“No, — since this heart’s last mortal blow,
Thy hands refuse to spare,
Let not the life’s blood outward flow ;
But inward bleeding, cease to show
That death and thee, are there !”

Miss Stephens now, or Mara then, could not have produced a more powerful effect ; an effect which would have been mortifying to some performers, since it sent nearly all Jane’s auditors in different directions from her.

Mr. Mulcaster first retreated at a mischievous glance from Dora Clavering, in which he saw the name of Lady Catherine Eustace so legibly written, that it blinded him to the favour there also, regained for him by Honoria.

Lord Francis was the next seceder; but he moved away with as much haughtiness as disturbance, as though alike disdaining the subject, and the songstress. Miss Clavering vanished next; but she was evidently not well: and her rapid-glancing sister disappeared after her.

Honoria shrunk back to hide the consternation into which she was thrown, by observing the look of Fitz Arthur as Miss Clavering left the room, — a look full of tender, unrestrained solicitude. No persons remained to applaud the singer, except only the Dean and Mr. Meredith.

Honoria now heard herself called upon; but sing she could not; and pleading every possible excuse, she entreated permission to remain a listener: she became so pale from earnestness, that Fitz Arthur

hastily implored them not to press her further. It was the first time he had taken any obvious interest in her through that day ; and the kindness of the motive, as well of the notice itself, went to her heart. She could not imagine why a testimony of Fitz Arthur's interest should affect her so very much.

By way of aiding in Miss O'Hara's relief, William Mulcaster hazarded a petition to his Eton king, for one of his extempore melodies. A short and startling negative, from which there was evidently no appeal ; and for which no civil excuse was offered, silenced the petitioner. He then betook himself to the examination of certain pictures, decorating the walls of an outer room ; a task self-imposed, in consequence of a wicked eye-beam from his father, then taking Lady Henderson's place at the whist-table.

Lady Henderson hurrying to relieve Jane Mulcaster from the toil of amusing her company, accepted the offered seat at the piano, from which her brilliant and rapid finger soon drew forth the finest

harmonies. Jane's extended hand brought Honoria back to her standing-place, near the instrument, where Mr. Meredith was listening with some of that pure pleasure, unadulterated by the associations which a very retired life prevents us from painfully accumulating, — a pleasure we have complete, but in childhood. Lord Francis Fitz James suddenly came up as Lady Henderson was beginning a slow movement, wishing her good night in an under tone; then bowing to Sir John as he passed out, quitted the apartment as unsatisfactorily as he had entered it. No one had heard his carriage announced; but none of the ladies seemed inclined to question how he was going home, and his friend William, who might have done so, had wandered away to study the physiognomy of Sir John Henderson's ancestors, male and female.

Pursuing this highly ingenious contrivance for whiling away time till the Misses Clavering should re-appear, he sauntered idly down the well-lighted suite of drawing-rooms, and was actually crossing into

a smaller room on the other side of a passage, when Lord Francis issued forth. He heard his friend's voice in the hall, and would have hastened back to question his early departure, had not a glimpse of more portraits, or the living picture of a bent-down head garnished with long fair locks, resting, as if in sadness, on a table, impelled him forward.

Moved by a better feeling than curiosity, William gently pushed open the door, and entered: the fair head was lifted; the long light ringlets fell back; discovering the face of Dora Clavering bathed in tears, and now covered with a blush.

William's spirits and presumption were checked. "Good Heaven! Miss Clavering!" he cried, "I beg — I beg your pardon! — I did not know — indeed, I did not intend — I was looking at the pictures." His handsome face was infinitely handsomer than usual, from its expression of respect and concern.

Dora Clavering was at that age in which

the heart is unguarded, from the notion of its own pure feelings and right sympathies ; Miss O'Hara's account of William Mulcaster's amiable nature was yet on her ear ; and she was fresh from a scene of unexpected, bitter anguish : her tears burst out afresh, while trying to rally herself, and get away ; and she retook her seat.

"You unhappy !" William exclaimed, with a passionate earnestness, of which he was not aware, "You that I should think every blessing on earth ought to — can *you* be unhappy !"

"Oh, yes ! yes !" ejaculated Dora, actually beside herself with doubt and dismay, "for I see the person I best love dying for what I can never try even, to recover for them, unless I give myself up to the odium of being called, selfish, designing, mercenary"—She wrung her hands, and broke off.

"I cannot comprehend !" repeated the amazed William.

"Oh, do not try !" interrupted the alarmed Dora. "This ought not to have

escaped me : so pray, pray don't repeat this strange scene to any one. And we ought not to be here ;" (starting up from her seat;) "tell me you won't repeat it. I think you won't ; I have heard so much of your kind-heartedness !"

A summons from his guardian angel could scarcely have entranced William more than did this assurance from the very lips that had so lately mocked him with affected disdain. He besought her with joyful trepidation, (after giving the promise demanded,) to say who had praised him to her, that he might deify him for all eternity.

"O, one that knew you at school ; and as I believe that people grow up like what they were when children, I think far better of you, on this short acquaintance, than I do of some I once thought more deserving."

Stimulated by the wringing sigh which had burst out with these words, William pressed for the repeater's name. Dora would not give it ; saying, as she now hurried towards the door, in a tone reso-

lute to banish dangerous sensibility, "Be satisfied that he told me most of the good I know of you. Had I estimated you by the discourses with which you have honoured *me*, I cannot say I should have rated you higher than my *poupée* in days of yore."

Dora now looked with her half-coquetish air of raillery; but William would not be charmed out of deepening seriousness. He returned to the charge of enquiring about the cause of her tears, as he re-entered with her the long line of the many receiving-rooms; asking, with all the ardour of youth and inexperience, if there were any thing on earth he could do, to serve her, or hers, or save her the shedding of a single tear.

Dora was again thrown off her guard by his warm sympathy, and look of genuine kindness. "You, perhaps, of all persons," she inconsiderately said, "I would give this hand for freedom to do so!"

"Give the other," hurried out the foolishly impetuous William, regarding the

marriage hand, "and I know one would scale the heavens for you."

"Or swim the Hellespont, or uproot the pyramids, or tame lions into lapdogs, or any other monstrous impossibility!" exclaimed Dora, with more than derision in her voice. "Give my left hand to one of you sleek tygers, weeping hyænas, glittering serpents, — never! after what I have seen."

Mr. Mulcaster stood rooted to the floor. His astonished gaze brought the young lady back to recollection, and covered with confusion, she hastily added, "Come, let us talk of something else — of that sweet, bewitching Miss O'Hara. Do you think she will take your fine friend? Lord Francis, I mean. Your sister seemed sure of it, from something she said to me and Agnes."

Though Dora spoke with great carelessness, they were unluckily just under a great chandelier, and its strong light showed a very striking emotion in her countenance. A most unpleasant suspicion crossed the mind of William: it

came and went like a flash of lightning. Dora Clavering could not be more than seventeen, if she were even that; Lord Francis had been jilted at least three years ago. William had just believed himself doomed to fall a prey to coquettes; he now dismissed the idea, and began contributing his stock of reasons for believing in a probable attachment between Lord Francis and Miss O'Hara, provided time were allowed for their present mutual admiration to ripen.

This of course brought on an eulogium upon his friend's virtues; to which Dora listened with rather a sceptical air, as they strolled through the lighted saloons. This did not escape his observation.

As she quickened her steps when in that room which opened to the one containing the other company, William had tact or discretion enough to remain behind, duly meditating upon exactly the worst picture and ugliest portrait on the walls. What discoveries he made in this painting, or in the art itself, it is hopeless to enquire; but some discovery he cer-

tainly thought he had made; though possibly it might have little to do with canvass heads.

William was found still studying this production of a pencil unknown to fame, when the Dean and his two ladies (who concluded him gone away with Lord Francis) were proceeding towards the hall. Dora Clavering's murmured regrets to Lady Henderson, about her sister's extreme nervousness from the relaxing weather, had reached the considerate Dean, who soon contrived to get from the whist table. His rising was a signal for that of others; and at the same moment every one except Fitz Arthur said good night.

At the hall-door the porter was telling the Wearmouth postilion, who had come for Lord Francis Fitz James, that his Lordship had chosen to walk back to Ravenshaw.

"Walk back!" muttered Mr. Mulcaster, as he ought to have been handing his sister into his father's coach; "that is singular."

“Not in the least!” rejoined the Dean; “’tis a fine night, with an inspiring moon. Doubtless we shall overtake his Lordship dabbling at once in dew and rhyme. What staunch poet ever yet heeded damp feet and dirty stockings when in pursuit of his Daphne?”

William mounted into the carriage in dogged silence.

“About as disagreeable a dinner as I ever *assisted at!*” exclaimed the Dean, when they were fairly off. “The company to do them justice, however, were certainly harmoniously agreed upon one point: that of being as unlike their ordinary selves as possible. Your two sparks, Miss O’Hara, were pre-eminent.”

Honoria would not enquire whom he meant; but with an attempt at her usual tone, yet awkwardly enough, cried, “O in mercy, dear sir, do not make *me* the sport of your wit!”

“Good Mr. Highwayman, pray do not shoot me!” continued the Dean, imitating her begging accent. “The worthy gentlewoman who made this memorable

appeal, must have had your notion of the best mode of persuasion ; but I beg leave to hint, that neither highwaymen nor testy old gentlemen like to have themselves called by their right names, or twitted with their practices ; however, let that pass. I was observing that the swain you have frowned upon, and the one you now smile upon, seemed in my judgment this night to be taking a most extraordinary mode of recommending themselves to your favour. Certainly my Lord Francis had the better of his antagonist, both as to pleasing the lady and displeasing other people — though he *is* William's friend or patron."

William did not utter.

"Lord Francis did *not* appear in an amiable light ;" said Honoria, with well-judged promptitude : "and if Captain Fitz Arthur were not himself, surely he might be allowed great uneasiness about his father's fit of giddiness."

"And you really say, Lord Francis did not appear amiable!" exclaimed Jane, with unfeigned astonishment. "We

all concluded he was making the agreeable to you, most effectually."

"If you mean by that, to avow that you thought he was talking animatedly and interestingly to me;" pursued Honoria, her heart beating with anxiety to be credited; "you were right. But I begin now to judge of persons more from what they are to others, than from what they please to be to myself. Lord Francis said nothing to me that was not calculated to make me admire his talents, and think well of his heart and principles: (for I assure you, Jane, there was no flirtation between us :) but he said and looked things to others, which make me suspect that he either has a wretched temper, or an arrogant contempt for every one less gifted than himself."

"You are a bold speaker with William there on the opposition bench;" observed the Dean, pausing vainly for his son to interfere; then resuming, "Go on, Miss O'Hara, I like your sentiments, if they are not a young lady's mask. But what displeased you principally in his Lordship to-day?"

“A trivial thing, you may perhaps think ;” replied Honoria fluttered, yet fortified by success. “The very ungracious tone in which he refused complying with Mr. Mulcaster’s animated request that he would sing. Others refused ; but, I trust, with evident regret at their own temporary incapacity. Lord Francis did it, as if he alone, of all the world, had a right to break through the common laws of politeness and friendship. Now certainly Lady Henderson had one claim, and Mr. Mulcaster another. Nothing except ill-humour or a disobliging disposition, or over-weening arrogance, can account for this. He said something had vexed him before he came out : his fits of crossness are not short ones therefore.”

“Upon my word, Miss O’Hara !” exclaimed William, provoked out of dearer thoughts : “you go on like the giant in Madame Danois’ fairy tales, who was in such a hurry to fight *the genteel Avenant*, that he gave him the lie three times, before the poor wretch had once opened his mouth ! — I am very sorry to

contradict a lady ; — but I heard Lord Francis say he had been much *discomposed* that morning ; and if you look in the dictionary, or apply to Mr. Tudor, you will find that a man may lose his composure without losing his temper.”

Honorina was beginning a propitiatory answer ; but the Dean insisting upon her going on to him, and leaving his son unanswered, after much urging, having a strong desire to free herself from the suspicion of a particular fancy for his Lordship, she recommenced.

“ I did not quite like the freezing distant civility of his Lordship to Sir John Henderson ; who, though not a man of brilliant faculties, is surely respectable. And when Captain Fitz Arthur was sitting by Miss Clavering, because both were rather silent, he asked me, in a sarcastic tone, ‘ If I knew what could be the attraction between two such inanimate persons.’ Even Miss Dora Clavering’s sweet girlishness seemed to offend his fastidiousness ; for I saw him look at her several times with bitter scorn.”

At this conclusion Mr. Mulcaster was on the point of breaking forth again ; but checking the strong impulse, he resettled himself in his own corner, and his own meditations.

The Dean mused a moment or two, during which Jane was expressing her surprise at Honoria's very severe judgment upon Lord Francis Fitz James, — a person they had all supposed so exactly suited to her turn of mind. “Miss O'Hara,” he said, at length, “you have observed and judged so well, that I congratulate you, either upon having already disposed of your affections to some man possessing the qualities his Lordship wants, or upon having a head capable of guiding you safely through life without other assistance, unless you like to have a ruler. So I dismiss your cause : and now we may conclude that William has gone to sleep, I may venture to say what I think of his new flame. Why, then, I like her much, much better than I did his last one. She is far prettier, and only far too *spirituelle*.”

"Can a woman have too much of that quality?" enquired Jane.

"It may stand in the way of her liking a simpleton," jocosely observed the Dean. William kept steadily silent. "William is certainly a most indefatigable student," he continued. "He'll master the science of love-making, so completely, that if any body would be so good as institute a lectureship at one of the colleges on the subject, I might hope for the gratification of seeing my son fill that honourable station. I reckon, that in about five or six more years, he will venture to consider his own education in that line perfected. By that time he will have added at least twelve more inextinguishable flames to his list."

"Oh, papa!" cried Jane. "William never liked any one seriously, — much — except Lady Catherine."

"Cry you mercy, child!" exclaimed the Dean. "I fancied that he regularly fell in love every six months."

"By my life, sir, you are too hard upon me!" interrupted William, piqued

to find, that instead of listening to a eulogium upon the lady of his thoughts, as he had expected, he was taken in, to hear himself ridiculed.

“What, thou art awake, after all! musing, — not dreaming! — That is an awful token indeed! — Well, if it be so very serious, I'll put thee out of thy pain, by saying, that as the young lady has a fair face, fair character, and a fair fortune, so that you come by all these fairly, I don't care on what fair day you make her one of my fair daughters.”

“Pshaw! stuff, sir!” interrupted William, in a mixed tone of pleasure and petulance.

“Pshaw! stuff!” repeated his father, with mock astonishment. “I shall not forget this gracious return for my voluntary goodness. An hour may come, sir youth, when you may crave the boon vainly, on your two bended knees.”

William mangled a monstrous sigh, but said nothing.

“The wind comes plaguily into this carriage to-night:” said the Dean, fidgeting his head and shoulders, as his

daughter's softer breath followed that of William. "I hear a dismal whistling about my ears."

"Well, I own *I* sighed," said Jane, always kindly willing to be every one's scape-goat.

"O, you sighed!" repeated her father. "Then I suppose it was William's sigh, and Miss O'Hara's sigh, and now your sigh, that I mistook for three points of the compass. I am certainly not so fantastical as the lady who screamed against her admirer fanning her, lest he should give her a cold. But I think I run no small chance of getting a crick in my neck amongst you all."

William's sighing silence touched his tender-hearted sister. She had often heard him get up a sort of groan for Lady Catherine; but a real, legitimate sigh on her account, she never remembered him to have breathed for her: and wishing to win him out of his dull humour, she asked him, "Where he thought her Charles would sleep that night?"

"Charles! — What Charles!" interrupted her father.

The sweet-natured Jane was abashed, but not hurt. "Now you know, dear sir, there is but one Charles in the world, for you, as well as me! — *My* Charles — *my* Stanhope."

"True — true, my child!" was her father's immediate answer. "God grant you may ever think of him with this fulness of affection. That affection, and his principles, under Heaven, are my guarantees for your future happiness with him."

Jane's lips spoke on her father's hand: the Dean's thoughts were now turned into the channel of tenderness: and at once ceasing to jest, he continued to make her prospects his theme, till they were near St. Cuthberts.

During his father's and sister's conversation, William chewed the cud of his own speculations upon his extraordinary scene with Dora Clavering. That it was an extraordinary one, he felt past doubt; and it puzzled him to discover its meaning. On one point, however, he was satisfied; that his first suspicion respect-

ing his friend Fitz James was unfounded ; though the accuracy of his second one he was prevented from attempting to ascertain, by the promise of secrecy extorted by Dora.

But of Dora herself, Dora singly, he soon thought only. She had interested him more in five minutes than all the women he had ever admired or seen, had done during his whole life ; she had impressed him deeply with a belief that her heart was full of domestic affections ; she had flattered him by her marked attention to *his* father ; and she had captivated all his senses by her youthful beauty and playful grace. He was on the very verge of being really, fervently, worthily in love !

Honoria, too, had her meditations : but she could not so satisfactorily make out her own heart, as William did his. After seeing Fitz Arthur so well at ease under her refusal of him, she ought to be quite comfortable. Or, if she believed there was uncivil unconcern in his manner, she ought to be displeased. Yet she

was not comfortable ; — she was not indignant ; — she was depressed to actual misery.

What could this mean ? Was it that, in consequence of Fitz Arthur's habitual watching and waiting upon her eyes, she found a strangeness in seeing him without having him at her side in solicitous attendance ? Was it that she felt more keenly, than she had imagined, the evident forfeiture of her happy intimacy with the whole family at Arthur's Court ? Was it, that she still saw her conduct towards Sir Everard in too strong a light, and abhorred herself more than was necessary ? Or could it be, that Fitz Arthur's pure tenderness had surrounded her, till it had penetrated to her unconscious heart, — that it had been the atmosphere of her best and happiest feelings — the principle of her life, unknown, unfelt, till it was withdrawn ?

Honoraria tried to refuse credence to this alarming thought ; ever recurring to her earliest notions of instantaneous impressions. Yet, again and again, she

wished for Mrs. Preston, whose kind interference might have regained for her the friendship of Sir Everard and his son. As it was, writing on the subject was out of the question : it was so difficult to arrange such feelings upon paper ; and if she could do so to Mrs. Preston, delicacy would not permit her to allow Mrs. Preston to make them the subject of an especial letter to Delaval Fitz Arthur : it would look like wishing for —. Honoria abruptly ended her ruminations, by telling her friend Jane that her uncle had prayed her not to stay at St. Cuthberts longer than the day originally named, as his wife expressed much discontent at her absence, and he was not yet well enough to contest with her : that, however sorry Honoria was to quit the peace and kindness of her present abode, she *must* obey.

This communication perfectly explained to Jane's mind the unusual gravity and taciturnity of her naturally gay friend ; for Jane knew Honoria's fondness for them all, and knew the humiliation she

felt at the disorderly state of her home : added to this, there was Mrs. Meredith's temper to shrink from. She now began many a pathetic lamentation, though venturing not to petition for an act of disobedience, and in the midst of it they reached St. Cuthberts.

CHAP. IX.

THE next day, being Sunday, was one of rest to Honoria's troubled spirit. The serious offices of the day were to be attended to; and there was no going out to pay common visits; no mere callers admitted.

A sabbath was held sacred at St. Cuthberts, by all under its roof. Even the light-spirited William knew how to pay cheerful, habitual obedience to its holy ordinances. Whilst the Dean excluded levity from his home-circle at those stated periods, he suffered the sunshine of his children's happy tempers, and hitherto sinless lives, (sinless, we mean, in comparison with more lengthened ones,) to brighten the intervening hours between each devotional exercise.

The cheerful intercourse of minds and tastes ; the social walk, enjoying Heaven's bounteous feast of beauty and gladness, spread over earth and sky ; the sacred volume attentively listened to, and affectionately commented upon ; the kindly visit to sick or sorrowful in the neighbouring hamlet : — these were the ways by which a Christian family of accomplished, animated, admired young people, with a revered father to guide, and lure them on, filled up the day of peace and prayer.

Honorina felt every minute, as it passed, fall on her heart like soft-descending dew ; soothing, calming, refreshing. Her reflections upon her own past conduct became less bitter under the influence of religious impressions : for, whilst she listened to promises of pardon for sins against the greatest and holiest of Beings, upon the single condition of repentance, she felt that one erring mortal could not refuse his forgiveness to another, for an offence of which that other heartily repented.

Comforted by this conviction, or rather hope, she could give occasional attention, with livelier sympathy, to her friend Jane, whom a letter from Major Stanhope had, that morning, made nearly as happy as his sudden return would have done.

Stanhope had written the night before from a post town, where he was changing horses, intending to proceed through the night, that he might get the sooner to London, and get the sooner back. It was a clear night, he wrote; there would be a moon just late enough to light him till daybreak; and he should enjoy seeing the sunrise, thinking of his sleeping Jane.

It was Major Stanhope's first letter to Jane,—(O, the joy of a first letter!)—and it was written on a long sheet of foolscap, and it was quite filled.

Jane read it over and over again; thought of it, in spite of her better self, more than once during the morning service; and blushed afterwards, to be caught reading it in the shrubbery by herself.

“I am such a fool!” she said to Honoria, who had thus startled her. “But Charles is such a dear creature. O, Honoria, if I did not love him in a way that quite amazes myself, how should I bear the thought of leaving dear papa, dear William, my sisters, you, everybody that I have loved and lived amongst all my life? Attachment! — marriage! — our own hearts! what mysteries they are!”

Honoria agreed with her in pronouncing the strength of a new affection, a thing inexplicable; and, in speculating with her upon how far religion and conscience permitted a woman's self-devoting nature to place her opinions and happiness in the power of another fallible being like herself, they spent the time not unimprovingly, till summoned to their second attendance in the house of God.

St. Cuthberts was not in the parish of Edenfell; the family attended their own village-church, where the Dean regularly did duty when not at his deanery. The only great pews, in the little old church,

were those of Lord Hexham, and Sir John Henderson.

The Hexham family did not pique themselves upon a character for devotion : so they were all absentees ; — a circumstance not displeasing to Mr. Mulcaster, who did not quite like mixing up light feelings with thoughts dedicated to our highest duty. Had he been coming out of an opera-house, or sauntering in Kensington Gardens, he would not have been sorry to have shown himself to Lady Catherine Eustace, with such a lovely creature as Dora Clavering loitering by his side. But now, he was well content just to see Dora close to him as they walked through the narrow churchyard to the stile at its entrance ; both her countenance and his, divested of every expression unsuitable to the place they had quitted.

There had been greetings, and enquiries, and concern expressed that Miss Clavering's indisposition kept her from attending service, amongst the rest of the party who were slowly advancing

after them ; but William and Dora walked on, without speaking to, or scarcely looking at each other. And why they continued so to walk, or how they got side by side at all, neither of them could exactly explain.

Persons who have met seldom, and never but to be gay, often feel some awkwardness when they meet in situations where they must be grave: distance and reserve appear, then, to them, to be inseparable from gravity. William might have pursued the topic of Miss Clavering's ill health, but he did not ; and conscious that his father was behind him, continued to keep his head bent down ; and for fear his eyes should stray to the face of his fair companion, fixed them on her slight foot, and nymph-like step.

We are told there is an eloquent silence. Miss Dora Clavering's must have been of that rare sort ; for though she uttered only the simple phrases of "Good day !" "I wish you good morning !" each time she met Mr. Mulcaster

on entering and quitting church, she managed to dissipate all his uneasy fancies.

When Sir John Henderson was handing the Misses Mulcaster into their carriage, ere he took care of his own ladies, Miss Dora Clavering was by some chance so near Mr. Mulcaster, that he could not withhold from her the assistance of his hand; and after she was seated, he observed her look out of the window more than once in the direction of the spot where he stood waiting for his father.

“ I don't think she absolutely dislikes me,” he said, modestly to himself; and with that moderate notion, turned homewards as joyous as youthful hopes of youthful freshness, could render a heart inclined to every right and warm affection.

The next morning, after having seen his father off to his deanery, Mr. Mulcaster appeared at the breakfast-table in renewed spirits, announcing his intention of driving Stanhope's tandem, first to Monksden, to enquire after Miss Cla-

vering, as common civility required, on account of her indisposition; then proceeding to Ravenshaw, to make Lord Francis Fitz James fix a day for dining at St. Cuthberts, where he pledged himself for his restoration to Miss O'Hara's good opinion; and lastly, to Edenfell, to beg or bully Mrs. Meredith out of a week more of Miss O'Hara's company.

"Valorous knight that I am!" he said, lightly. "You see, madam, that I dare dragons, and would dragoons, in a lady's cause."

His sister, Henrietta, begged to hint, that if he really wished to reach the last-mentioned places, he had better not make Monksden the first on his list. William thanked her for the sisterly advice, but declined taking it; saying he had sundry articles to deliver at Monksden. These turned out to be whole packages of toys and pictured books for Lady Henderson's children; for the purchase of which his groom had been despatched to Morpeth by daybreak. With these well stowed in Stanhope's pretty car-

riage, he dashed off, at what he called *a pace*, straight for Monksden.

Honoriam envied his light-heartedness, and chid her own folly, for not having had voice and composure enough to suggest the propriety of a call at Arthur's Court; whither she could now only wish he might think of going, to ask after Sir Everard.

Jane's marriage was so near at hand that there was a great deal to be done in the way of preparation. Bonnets and dresses were to come from London for the bride; but materials for the millinery of her sisters, for their gowns and cloaks, &c. were to be chosen nearer home. Satins and laces were to be examined, colours adjusted, toilet-talk freely indulged in, during the opportune absence of the Dean, who was ever disposed to cut such talk short.

Honoriam's proverbial taste and swift fingers were always at the service of her female friends, and she now found in their employment a seasonable diversion from her own self-scrutiny. As every

consultation went forward in a general council of maids and mistresses, there was no opportunity for the discussion of topics more interesting; therefore the whole morning and afternoon hurried away with but one or two interruptions from visitors. Lord Francis Fitz James called and left cards for the Dean and William; he was not sufficiently intimate to ask for the ladies. Other cards were laid on the table by the servant, but none bore the name of Fitz Arthur. Honoria's spirits quite flagged again.

Mr. Mulcaster came back so late from his excursions, that Honoria secretly hoped he had taken Arthur's Court in his way to her uncle's. He had not, however. He had found Fitz Arthur beforehand with him in enquiries after Miss Clavering, and he was glad to say the good Baronet was perfectly well again. Fitz Arthur himself looked dreadfully ill: but that was not wonderful, seeing he had just been prosing with Sir John and Miss Clavering in a little boudoir up-stairs, for she had not been

visible to inferior personages. William, however, was proud to own that Lady Henderson was delighted with all he had brought for the children: and the children had half ate him up with rapture; and Dora Clavering had consented to take the new toys under her especial lock and key while she staid; and she was looking more lovely than ever; and though she, too, complained of a head-ache, (woman's never-failing cover for an aching heart,) she had actually sung for him to her guitar with a voice like a flute; and in short he thought her a very nice girl; and let his father and sisters laugh at him as they chose, he would not be badgered out of an agreeable house to lounge at, where there were such a pleasant master and mistress, such dear little children, a capital billiard-table, and the very best wine in the county.

Henrietta smiled incredulously at this sudden passion for billiards and good wine. "Well! and what had happened to him at Ravenshaw and Edenfell?"

In some confusion, William owned he

had not got farther than Monksden. For, after a little chat with the ladies, and a game of romps with the boys, he had unluckily offered to hold some skeins of silk or crewels for Lady Henderson, and they took up so much time — and it would have been so uncivil to have gone away before they were all wound — that it was too late; so he must pay those visits to-morrow; and if his sisters, Sophy and Henny, chose to call on the ladies at Monksden, (which, of course, in common good-breeding they would do,) and would give him some idea of the time they would be there, he would contrive to ride home that way, and escort them back.

“I only hope he has left off walking in his sleep;” whispered Henrietta, with a little of her father’s humour, “else he will be at Monksden to-night.”

This whisper drew down upon her William’s vengeance, in the shape of pleasantries upon her “saint,” as he termed the very fine young man to whom she was engaged; and whom he in fact

defended in society, from every intended ridicule aimed at Mr. Wallington's serious view of the holy profession to which he belonged. As she contended for her saint, and he for his coquette, with equal gaiety and good-humour, every one was amused or took a share in the contest.

"And when is Captain Fitz Arthur (for I can't help calling him so,) coming to St. Cuthberts?" asked Jane, in a pause of the combatants. "He has not been here, for a wonder, since Honoria came!"

"I wish you ladies would leave off expecting a man to be all his life in love with the same woman," exclaimed William, petulantly. "Miss O'Hara took such especial good care to show poor Fitz Arthur that she never could like him, that I think it is desperately hard if he is to be bound down to following and fawning upon her, like a cringing animal. Craving your fair pardon, Miss O'Hara! I tell you, he has business every day at Monksden with Sir John,

about Miss Clavering's estates; and he may be going to marry Miss Clavering, for aught I know to the contrary, unless Miss O'Hara should happen to think better of it."

Honor's face was luckily hid by a large screen; her instant change of colour was therefore unobserved. She struggled hard against the emotion produced in her by this light remark. It was as lightly uttered, without the remotest notion of giving pain; rather in vindication of the speaker's sudden transfer of affection, than in sober belief of its applicability to Fitz Arthur. She was, however, assured that it might be a truth, and that her fault would have its full punishment. Had she been alone, she would have wept over the conviction: as it was, with tears impatiently suspended, until night and solitude might allow them to fall, she emerged from behind the screen, with a book in her hand, as the butler announced "Mr. Rutherford."

At that name William lifted up his

hands and eyes, in speechless abhorrence : then, sullenly advancing as his father's representative, mangled some *detested words* of welcome and civility.

Not that the new comer was either abhorred or detestable in himself : he merely came unseasonably ; when William was *set in*, for a long evening of good-humoured tyrannizing over his sisters, and ever-recurring mention of Dora Clavering. The appearance of Mr. Rutherford put all these expectations to the rout. " How could he have forgotten that the tiresome monster came regularly every year at the same day to receive rents near them, dine and sleep at St. Cuthberts, and depart by eight of the clock ! "

William inwardly determined that breakfast for the worthy squire should be ordered long before seven the next day, and that he himself would be up, to see his orders executed, and *do the civil* at the same time.

Mr. Rutherford was kindly received by Isabella Mulcaster, while she apolo-

gized for her father's absence ; negligently, though good-humouredly by Sophia ; cheerfully by Henrietta ; and cordially by Jane, whose happy heart was overflowing just then, with more than its usual benevolence.

Honorina made a smiling curtsy, in answer to his clumsy bow, and very soon afterwards dinner summoned them to the eating-room.

William in the sulks all the time they sat at table, passed upon the simple Mr. Rutherford, for a young man grown steady. He professed himself quite pleased to see his good friend the Dean so happy in his son : at one time he feared he seemed inclined to be a little wild. "Only nineteen, I think, sir !" he observed, addressing the grim victim of his spectacled scrutiny, "and nothing of the youngster about you : done with all your gibes and jeers ! — Do you remember how you roasted me this time last year, you and that Miss —"

"O yes, I remember !" William wished him burning, instead of roasted.

"Indeed, I never saw a youth so much altered for the better."

"I hope you think so too, young ladies?" William dryly questioned. None of them trusted themselves to look up, much less to answer.

"And do you remember my joking you in the corner, by the image there, about that young lady?—What's become of that young lady by the by? I think her name was —"

"O never mind her name," hastily interrupted William, "let you and I drink a glass of wine." It is to be hoped William did not wish the draught to choak his companion, but certainly with no very friendly glance, he began asking him sundry questions about crops and taxes, endeavouring to get him off the scent of one of his past fanciful likings.

But Mr. Rutherford would not be put off; and returning to the point, insisted so upon having the lady's name, that at length, Henrietta, by a laborious exertion of memory, to Honoria's momentary amusement, pronounced one she had never heard. At another time she might have enjoyed William's confusion, but now with a softened heart, and subdued

spirits, she appeared not to credit the implied accusation of Mr. Rutherford; and William's face thanked her for it.

As dinner was just removed, and the servants withdrawn, Mr. Rutherford felt privileged to pursue what he fancied his own jocular vein; so he repeated some thread-bare jests about his own state of singlehood, proceeding to reckon up the years, months, days, and minutes, which composed his existence of fifty-three years. "Let me see, I was born on the 24th of June, *anno Domini*" — William catching the direction of the elderly gentleman's eye, as it veered towards Miss Mulcaster, interrupted him with — "Yes, yes, I remember; and you were nearly sent out of the world, the minute you entered it, eh?"

The "whale" caught at "the tub;" and Mr. Rutherford directly began a long story of his being nearly strangled by his mother's nurse. William looked all the while as if he had half a mind to finish the nurse's work; but swallowing his vexation, he broke in again upon the patient proser.

“ Ah well ! — yes ! — well ! — now let us speculate upon what would have happened to you if you *had* been strangled.” “ Why, there’d have been an end of me, wouldn’t there ?” enquired Mr. Rutherford, stupidly staring.

William, who was evidently doubling to throw out the old gentleman from some other subject of annoyance, replied gravely ; “ To be sure, and that is what I would take into serious consideration. Do you think that your infant soul being unbaptized, would have gone directly to — ” “ O sir, excuse me ;” cried Mr. Rutherford, with instant reserve. “ I never presume to think of such matters out of church. Ask your worthy father, it’s his calling, to satisfy you. To be sure, young ladies, Mr. William is grown very serious indeed. So as I was a saying, Miss Mulcaster,—”

“ Mr. Rutherford, will you favour me with a pinch of your capital snuff !” interrupted William ; then, as the old proser gave it him, resuming, “ *anno Domini*,” he broke in again, with admiration of the snuff-box, enquiring where it was made.

"I really don't know, and don't care," was the fretful answer, resuming, "*anno Domini* seventeen hundred and thirty-eight; — now you see, Miss Mulcaster, you were —"

William was on him again, with the bound of a tyger. "Your age, sir, puts time into my head, and time eternity; — I've just thought of a capital riddle on the subject; — I know you patronize puzzles. Tell me, Mr. Rutherford, why is eternity like my sister Henrietta's slipper? Put out your feet, Henny."

Henrietta did as she was bid, and Mr. Rutherford once more put on his spectacles.

"I protest I can't tell! perhaps if Miss would favour me with her shoe for a minute." William had it off in a moment, and in the simple squire's hand.

Mr. Rutherford considered it attentively; turned it over and over, with as anxious a look at one instant, and as rueful a one the next, as though he had been tasked to decipher the Rosetta stone.

"Why is Miss Henny's slipper like eter-

nity? No — that's not it. Why is eternity like Miss Henny's slipper? — Upon my life that's puzzling. I hope there's nothing profane in it, Mr. William! — the shoe's black, and peaked-toed; — without a heel! It's nothing about Hell, I hope?" half simpering.

"No, not a bit of that!" cried William, enchanted with having averted the dreaded evil.

"O, now I've found it out!" exclaimed Mr. Rutherford; "now I've got it. It's because it's large!"

Even William went into a convulsive fit of laughter, at this awkward supposition. During which, Mr. Rutherford, in serious distress, kept interposing with "No! no. I didn't mean *large*, Miss Henny, — *long* was the word. I meant to have said long; a long foot is genteel for a lady, isn't it, Mr. William? Now what *is* the right answer?"

"Everlasting, sir, everlasting!" cried William, recovering; "the stuff the shoe is made of. But if the ladies will only do us the favour of taking themselves

off, I have a much better secret to let you into."

Jane's cheeks showed she had a shrewder talent at guessing riddles than the heavy-headed squire; and Miss Mulcaster rising with unwonted alacrity, the female party vanished on the instant.

William, who never gave any thing grudgingly, except his company to those he cared not for, determining at present to give as little of that as possible to Mr. Rutherford, made up for such stinginess, by bounty in the article of wine; filling the old gentleman's glass with a rapidity which threatened him with suffocation.

By this process two bottles of claret were not long of being finished; so that William got himself and his companion re-united to the ladies before the merry ones amongst them, had finished their laughter at his fit of impatience.

After due congratulations to the bride elect, and stale witticisms addressed as compliments to her sisters, (which nearly drove him again upon the hated topic

William had so manfully towed him away from,) Mr. Rutherford fell into his usual almanack talk ; and his hearers being accustomed, yearly, to make the same rejoinders, had them all ready. William, after having seen the squire "properly crammed with tea and toast," thinking his own obedience to the laws of hospitality was fully established, threw himself at full length upon a sofa, exclaiming,—"I see you dislike the trouble of sleeping for yourself, Mr. Rutherford, so I'll take it off your hands. You never sleep, I am positive." Without regarding the worthy squire's solemn assurance "that he slept at night in his bed like other folks ; but must say he thought it very unseemly to sleep out of it, especially with five young ladies in company," the exhausted William betook himself to rest and revery.

As he shut his eyes, he was supposed to be really asleep ; yet so little were his slumbers respected, or believed in, by his sisters, that the squire asked, and Sophia sang, his annual treat of "Shepherds, I

have lost my love :” after which the old gentleman went prosing on, between sundry pinches of snuff, in the voice of a humming-top.

It may be supposed that the evening was not allowed to be much prolonged. As William proceeded along with Honoria and his younger sisters to their rooms, which opened upon the same corridor with his, he vented his ill-humour about Mr. Rutherford.

“ I maintain I have deported myself like an angel !” he cried vehemently. “ Playing the civil to these stupid animals, is what my father calls one of the minor acts of Christian duty, ‘ forbearing one another in love.’ No wonder I declined going into the church, Miss O’Hara, seeing I have no vocation for saintship ; all the worse for me ! — however, times will mend. Some day I will astonish you all. Whenever I marry, you shall see what a pattern-head-of-a-family I’ll turn out.”

Honoria begged to know why he plagued himself by harassing Mr. Ruther-

ford ; — why he did not let the good man go on with his own talk ?

William made a full stop at this question, and suffering the night-candle, dangling on his finger, to send its stream of wax down his clothes to the floor, replied, “ I detest to hear the subject of people’s ages discussed : and as Isabella’s birthday happens to be the 24th of June, as well as old Rutherford’s, I knew if once I let him turn that abominable corner of 1738, he would never stop till he came to *anno Domini* 17 — and I don’t know what. Ladies, when I legislate, I’ll make it capital for any one to enquire another person’s age, unless the latter personage be come to insure his life, or make an affidavit, or take out a marriage license.”

“ Then of course you will make another act to exclude the whole Shafto family from the benefit of your first,” observed Henrietta, “ otherwise the legislator himself may chance to suffer.”

William, who was conscious that he never lost an opportunity of reminding Miss Shafto that she was six and twenty,

(a year younger than the sister of whose private feelings he was thus tender,) felt the sportive reproof prick his conscience ; and telling Henrietta she was cut out for a parson's wife, being always ready to remind a wretch of his sins, bowed with mock solemnity, and retreated into his chamber. Honoria saw there was a secret motive in this apparent folly ; but as neither of his sisters offered any remark, she forbore enquiry ; and, exchanging cordial benedictions, retired to her own room, and her own regrets.

The next morning, when the ladies descended to breakfast, they found William standing out on the lawn, with a bird-cage in his hand, whistling to a bird there with his ordinary cheerfulness.

“ Well, girls,” he cried, “ the horrid fiend has departed — after making an awful breakfast of goose-pye and ale, and hot knead-cakes. Ever commend me to the face of a friend, and the back of a bore ! — but I have got this bird by being a-stir thus early.” It was a piping bull-

finch that could whistle a dozen tunes.

"How had he got it?"

"Not in a hedge, ye she-Solomons;" said William. "I was hoisting the squire into the diligence, on the high road, when a fellow came up with birds; so I gave him — I shan't tell you what I gave him for this — but I shall go to-day and give it to little Fanny Henderson."

"We'll take it!" exclaimed Sophia, intending to delight him. "We must call at Monksden to-day, and we'll take it in the carriage."

"And do you think I shall let the poor bird be jolted to death in a brutal carriage? — No — I shall make Mr. Bocket walk over with it in his hand, and I shall walk along with him to see he does not let it out, or do it any harm."

William's regard for the dumb creation was proverbial; and in an era to which the name of our member for Galway was unknown, he was not unfrequently ridiculed for its alleged excess. His sister Jane, however, did not give all the praise to his humanity on the present occasion;

and she held up her finger at him in playful accusation. The gentleman turned away with well-acted petulance. Jane, who was perpetually taken in by him, in a fit of contrition ran and threw her arms round his neck. William shook her off. "Always stifling one with kisses!" he exclaimed. "Let me alone, Jane! — I wonder how Stanhope can bear you."

Jane smiled in conscious innocence, and unclouded good-humour; but the other ladies flew upon the base accuser with such ardent resentment, that he was fairly obliged to confess his iniquity, and sue for pardon.

A kiss of the truest affection was then bestowed by him upon the sister he loved with actual fondness, though he enjoyed sporting with her credulous simplicity of heart; after which they all adjourned to the breakfast-parlour.

The meal despatched, and a due portion of time dawdled away between the stables and his flute, (for he could not settle to his usual rational reading,) away

went Mr. Mulcaster, his trusty man, and the bullfinch.

Honorina, with a heavy heart hid under forced cheerfulness, buried importunate thoughts under every occupation she could find. She dared not sit and think herself into tears over quiet needle-work: to do that, she must wait for a return to her own little solitude at Edenfell. Pride and false shame made her dread Jane's suspicion of her present feelings: — Jane that had so often heard her protest against the slightest partiality for Fitz Arthur! — Jane that knew how contemptuously she had been spoken of by his relative Mrs. Shafto! it was too great a sacrifice to friendship to make such a humiliating confidence; especially now, when the subject of it had evidently resolved upon leaving her unsolicited in his favour!

Honorina, therefore, did every thing she could, to oblige herself to exertion. She was now with Isabella among the plants, cutting and tying them up; then with Henrietta at her dairy; afterwards with Sophia to see old Dickens breaking in a

colt ; and lastly in conclave with Jane and her maids, deciding upon the nature of the bridal travelling-dress.

Many were the visitors that day ; but still neither Fitz Arthur nor Lady Haverford came.

The two Misses Mulcaster who were going to make their first call upon the Misses Clavering, did not ask Honoria to join their party, because she ever had professed criminal indolence about paying visits, and they were unwilling to take her from Jane. Now, however, Honoria might have thanked them for giving her a chance of meeting some one of the Fitz Arthur family, somewhere. As it was, she managed, just as they were going, to remark that she feared poor Hylton was ill, from none of the family having been near them ; she wished, therefore, her friends would call and enquire.

" Yes ! — yes ! " cried Sophia, hurrying away at the sound of Colonel Mason's horse prancing up to the door, the Colonel being her appointed escort ; " and if we can't go to-day, will go to-morrow."

Honorina knew by the tone this was said in, that Miss Sophia would forget or neglect the commission. She sighed, and resigned herself.

Very soon after their departure, a carriage, with the Wearmouth liveries, drove up to the entrance. In spite of her late speculations upon that lady's character, Honorina felt a sudden gush of pleasure at the idea of Lady Haverford. The step was let down, and the Dowager Countess of Wearmouth got out, unaccompanied.

Isabella Mulcaster was the next moment in the hall, welcoming and conducting her into the sitting-room, with an emotion of action and complexion (arising from the agreeable surprise) which gave a new character to her Madonna face.

Honorina rose with a look of animated respect, while Jane Mulcaster was hurrying forwards, with equal deference, but more familiar cordiality. Lady Wearmouth greeted the former with one of those graciously kind smiles which have

nothing of offensive patronage in them, and which, therefore, bring the hearts of the young and ingenuous to the feet of the person so distinguishing them. Towards the others she turned with looks almost maternal. Each of their blooming faces seemed objects of interest to her : but especially that of Isabella, whose hand she retained, pressing it frequently, while congratulating her father, through her, upon the approaching nuptials of Jane.

Every voice was tenderly reproachful to Lady Wearmouth, for her venturing out so immediately upon getting rid of indisposition.

“ I am soon well enough to come out,” she answered, with an air of pensive pleasure, “ when I may claim my friends’ sympathy in joy. I know you will all be pleased to find I have heard again from my son Horace. News to glad a mother’s heart.”

The flush of pleasure covered even Honoria’s cheeks at this, as she wished all good to Captain Barrington on her

distant relative's account. Miss Mulcaster's carnation complexion suddenly deserted her. Lady Wearmouth seeing the change, hastened to complete her intelligence, by saying her son was coming home; he was appointed to the command of the *Iris*, and had only to stop at one of our settlements by the way to bring home an official man. This might delay his return a few weeks longer; but he might arrive nearly as soon as this letter; and Lady Wearmouth, therefore, would not remain more than a few days longer in Northumberland. To London her Horace *must* go in the course of his duty; and she must meet him there, carrying with her all the pleasant news she was able to collect, of his oldest and dearest friends.

The sympathy asked, was cordially given by Jane; with more diffidence by Honoria. Miss Mulcaster uttered hers with downcast eyes and a restored complexion.

Lady Wearmouth once more pressed her passive hand; "I commission *you*,

my dear Isabella," she said, "to tell my happiness to your father; and I shall trust to you to let me know whether the Dean will open his doors as kindly to my 'rude and boisterous captain of the sea,' as he used to do to the joyous *mid*. Horace has not forgotten his second home, I can assure you. He is not changed."

The gentle sigh, the gentle tone of Lady Wearmouth, in which there was a mixture of pleasure and pain, were evidently eloquent to Isabella Mulcaster; for, with a brimming glance, she rose up, and abruptly left the room.

Neither her sister nor Lady Wearmouth took obvious notice of this sudden retreat. The latter turned to Honoria, and bespeaking her future esteem for her son, invited her to pass a day at Ravenshaw ere she left it.

Lady Wearmouth was a person without any wild enthusiasm: she had no instantaneous fancies selfishly indulged at the cost of the temporary favourite's future contentment. Anxious as she was to

return Mr. John Meredith's obligations to her son, by attentions paid to his niece, she kindly considered in what way such intended kindness would be best exerted; and decided that it would not be by bringing her too forward in that high society, where one vulgar connexion is a death-blow to the loveliest unportioned girl.

Lady Wearmouth had seen too many beautiful young creatures brought imprudently forward by indiscreet friends, or silly match-makers; and what had been their fate? One or two seasons of hollow supremacy over a crowd of competitors for *the beauty's* smile; one or two seasons of fevered expectations, blighted by the natural opposition of a lover's relations, or by the tardy repentance of the lover himself; then total deposition by some new public idol; or else faded charms, and retirement; some odious husband — or a broken heart!

Lady Wearmouth had seen all this follow the weakness of one *great friend's* wishing, and humbler parents allowing,

their sacrificed daughter to be shown as a sight, amongst crowds, with not one of whom she had a single endearing tie.

Lady Wearmouth, with Lord Francis Fitz James and Lady Haverford in her house, had postponed inviting Miss O'Hara from the Rectory, until two guests, so dangerous in two different ways, should be gone from Ravenshaw.

Lady Haverford had much heart, more fancy, and no foresight: she would have precipitated the enchanting Irish girl into every scene of display and notoriety, that it might have been possible for them to have reached together; and the judicious Countess, therefore, knew she might unintentionally do irreparable mischief to the very person she wished to serve and advance. What was to be apprehended from a residence under the same roof with Lord Francis, may be easily conjectured: though even to Lord Francis, Lady Wearmouth awarded the justice of believing, that the evil he might have committed would have been as involuntary as Lady Haverford's.

But Lady Haverford was gone, not to return ; and Lord Francis was so near going, that he had actually ordered post-horses that very morning. The order was, however, countermanded : and Lady Wearmouth, while she mentioned it, said, with an indulgent smile, " She must wait His Lordship's pleasure ; he would go some time ; if he did not, before Miss O'Hara dined with her, that young lady would be the gainer from his agreeable conversation, though *she* would lose the opportunity she had reckoned upon, of making herself and Miss O'Hara better acquainted by the freedom of a *tête à tête*."

Honoraria replied to this invitation with modest self-respect ; adding, " that she considered Her Ladyship's wish of having her, when she would be the only guest, as the most flattering of all gracious compliments."

Lady Wearmouth was pleased to observe that this assurance was sincere ; and Honoraria was as much gratified by the open manner in which Lord Fran-

cis's eccentricities of conduct had been spoken of.

Sundry messages were then to be delivered from Lady Haverford, which her aunt professed her inability to render in their original length and ardour. Lady Haverford had written from Ullswater, where she was detained by Lady George Bowes, to make the tour of the Lakes: and as that family were going on to Scotland, as well as the Viscountess, she had been prevailed upon to join their party; had sent for her servants, her carriage, her books, music, work-boxes, dressing-cases, &c.; all the pretty lumber, in short, with which fine ladies crowd themselves, and torment their maids, whenever they go five miles, or five hundred, from home.

Lady Wearmouth smiled, yet sighed, as she added; — “ You see what it is, my young friends, to squander away a fine heart, as you do a fine estate! I was going to say a hard thing, that only fools and knaves are benefited by it: and in truth, such characters make spoil of its

kindly qualities, without turning them to profitable use, leaving us better disposed people, to crave often in vain, for a penny."

Honorina was struck with the truth of this observation, as well as the lesson so gently insinuated; and the expression of her countenance showed Lady Wearmouth that her valuable hints for conduct would not be wasted upon the inexperienced orphan. As Honorina revolved them, she could not but recall a remark of Fitz Arthur's upon the same enchanting object. At Monksden she had heard him softening one of Lord Francis Fitz James's contemptuous comparisons, by urging that Lady Haverford had been married to a man wholly dissimilar to her in age, and habits, and that *she was not a mother*. Fitz Arthur had said this quietly, and with no oratorical heightening; yet his few words had offered the best apology for an affectionate nature diffusing itself too widely. Lord Francis's quotation of

"The weighty bullion of one sterling line,
Drawn to French wire, shall through whole pages
shine,"

had acknowledged, indeed, the original value of Lady Haverford's heart, but it contained too merciless an avowal of what he considered it now to be; and Honoria remembered it, with lively shame, at having ever been dazzled into a moment's imaginary preference of him before Fitz Arthur.

Lady Wearmouth's carriage was then called, and telling Honoria she meant to leave a card for Mrs. Meredith, at the Rectory, she bade farewell. Miss Mulcaster was not returned; but her voice was heard in the hall, intercepting the Countess, with whom she seemed merely to exchange a few affectionate words, then retreated again to her fastness, a little side-parlour.

Jane, with clasped hands, and a face crimsoned with joyful emotion, exclaimed in a stifled voice, "Now, thank God! my poor dear Isabella! she will be happy too! Papa cannot hold out now."

After such an exclamation, Honoria felt privileged to enquire what she alluded

to; and Jane's full heart immediately flowed out.

There had been an attachment between Horace Barrington and Isabella, when she first *came out*, as it is termed; and he, in the habit of spending his Winchester vacations between Ravenshaw and St. Cuthberts. On being appointed to a five years' station in the Indian Seas, he had owned this affection, and sought a promise from her in return: but at first Isabella refused to hear him, because she was four years older than he, and he was only nineteen; and after she had listened to him, her father would not; and Lady Wearmouth regretted the difference of their ages; owning, that she thought her son at nineteen could not exactly say what his opinion might be at four and twenty, upon a subject generally considered of such importance in a man's selection of a wife.

The Dean's was a more active opposition; so that Barrington was obliged to quit England with no other hope than

the forlorn one, of finding Isabella still single, and faithful to her tearfully owned affection, after five years of absence and abstinence from correspondence should have tried his steadiness to the utmost.

The Dean exacted, that no artificial means were to be employed, like letters and messages, of keeping the lover's heart to its post; therefore Isabella had not more information concerning Barrington than other friends of the Wearmouth family were furnished with: but she bore it unrepiningly; her father having promised, that if Mr. Barrington's affection outlived such trial, he would bestow her on him, in full confidence that neither youth nor age could of itself tarnish their domestic comfort.

So rigorously had the prudent father exacted obedience in this affair, and so truly had Lady Wearmouth sympathized with him in anxiety for the ultimate happiness of both parties, that no further intercourse had been kept up between the families at Ravenshaw and St. Cuthberts, than that of ordinary neighbour-

hood ; and the bare communication of when Horace Barrington was heard of, and how he was.

Upon this slender diet had Isabella Mulcaster's well-grounded attachment existed in patient subdued life ; during which time she had refused one or two unexceptionable proposals, in addition to other offers rejected before the young sailor's flame had sanctioned her smouldering one. It was now evident that her sailor was returning with a true heart to his first love, and that Lady Wearmouth waited only the Dean's consent to embrace Isabella as a daughter.

Happy were the tears with which Jane hurried through this little history. Honoria's eyes gladly seized the opportunity of pouring down their long accumulated, hardly restrained flood ; and Jane, as she saw her weep, could not forbear clasping her round the neck, calling her the dearest, tenderest of friends.

Honoria was humbled by the grateful exclamation ; too conscious that her sympathy would have been differently ex-

pressed had her own heart been happier. Nothing at this moment, except the certainty of Jane's incapacity to keep any secret from Major Stanhope, could have withheld her from at once saying why she shed such profuse tears : nay she was on the very brink of melting into the confession, when Lady Henderson's carriage drove past the windows and stopt at the door. Out of it came that lady herself, the two Misses Clavering, and Mr. Mulcaster.

Mr. Mulcaster had found the ladies projecting a visit to St. Cuthberts ; and as he had walked to Monksden, he had stopped to be brought home by them. Nothing was more natural ! — And Sophy and Henrietta must have gone to other places first, for they had not yet been to Lady Henderson's.

Mutual greetings were no sooner exchanged, than Jane eagerly imparted the news of Lady Wearmouth's visit, in a tone significant of much that he wished, to her brother. William's eyes lighted up. Again and again he repeated, — "Are

you sure he is coming home! — I am so happy! Where's Isabella?" And getting the information, out he ran to congratulate his sister, with a light lip, but deeply feeling heart; and to bring her back with him into the family circle.

By the time he re-appeared Dora Clavering was patting a huge Newfoundland dog, and a fine setter, suspecting them to be his property. "Did not Miss Dora Clavering admire those noble animals?"

"Yes, indeed; she was so fond of dogs! she wondered that she never yet had had a dog!"

On that hint Mr. Mulcaster spoke. He offered her the choice of every species known to naturalists. Any one would have thought he could create dogs at will. William, however, knew that gold is a magician's wand, and had Dora Clavering professed a wish for a dog from Mexico, or one from Hudson's Bay, he would have felt assured of being able to gratify her. The lady's desires, however, were humbler, and "any nice *little* creature," uttered with girlish simplicity, embold-

ened him to ask if she would just step out upon the lawn, and he would have all his dogs brought there, for her to see and choose.

Dora Clavering, it is certain, was never slow in granting the favour of her especial company to Mr. Mulcaster; above all things, if he invited her out of doors. She did not exactly know why she felt uncomfortable under observation when Mr. Mulcaster was by her: but it was so much pleasanter to dawdle about among flowers and trees, where a person might look aside at the shrubs, or exclaim at the charming weather, or even get a little away from their companion when he embarrassed her, without its appearing odd! — Indeed she was afraid she must confess to herself, that she certainly *did* like a little harmless flirtation; (especially with such a very handsome, amusing young man as Mr. Mulcaster;) and she was so afraid of being called to account for it by Lady Henderson, or more tenderly talked to by Agnes! Poor Dora knew not her own symptoms, and mistook

her disease completely. As she graciously volunteered walking into the purlieus of the stables and kennels, (where dogs living, and dogs to be born, were severally proffered for her acceptance,) she had prevailed upon Honoria to accompany her.

Desirous not to be outdone in politeness, or perhaps not unwilling to give the generous bestower a hint of the value he could attach to any gift, Dora left the choice of her future pet entirely to him. So one of Sylvia's puppies was proposed, and one of Sylvia's puppies it was to be. Sylvia had only to pup that very night, and give Mr. Mulcaster opportunity to begin the creature's education the next morning ; then his felicity would be complete.

While this important consultation was proceeding, William stood with a young raven on his fist, and great cat on his shoulder ; every now and then accosting a shapeless lump at his feet by the name of Hodge, bidding it take care and keep out of the way ; nodding between whiles

to a goat which came playfully butting against him, as if provoking him to play.

In due time, Dora was enlightened upon the subject of the three first worthies. They were all, however, William's property. The raven he had picked up a featherless thing fallen from the nest; the cat he had snatched out of the maid's apron as she was going to drown it, when a kitten; and the hedgehog he had bidden for, over Thomas Fitz Arthur's head, that the urchin might not torture it.

As William stood like a second Noah amongst his numerous living creatures, fondling and talking to them all, Dora Clavering did not think him the less handsome for smiling kindly upon such dependants.

"Another Andrew Selkirk," he said gaily, 'monarch of all I survey!' Now if Miss Clavering chooses to see our indifferent grounds, and the Bower Cottage, (which is without a tenant, luckily,) she will perhaps do you and me the honour of walking on with us?" address-

ing Honoria too. Miss Dora Clavering was in the mood to see any thing at St. Cuthberts ; and her manner of saying so, was so artlessly open, that it left William charmingly doubtful whether she acted from mere girlish curiosity, or was flatteringly willing he should suspect his attentions were not displeasing.

The Bower Cottage was actually a show-place belonging to the Dean, though just beyond the boundary of St. Cuthberts, and generally let to a respectable tenant : to it therefore they went. Honoria accompanied them in pure good-nature, being well convinced that the youthful pair by her side had few thoughts to spare for her.

It was impossible to remark Mr. Mulcaster's now eager, now apprehensive manner, or to hear his often ineffectual attempts at his naturally careless tone, without perceiving that there was a serious anxiety to please under these appearances ; and though the young lady was less easily divined, Honoria thought she could observe in her, too, less sportiveness

and more sensibility of look and voice than on their first introduction.

And why should such rising inclination be quenched? The parties were suited to each other in age, character, and situation: William had a valuable heart; and Dora's sweet blue eyes spoke of treasures under that surface of pretty childishness. When her sister's delicate state of health was mentioned, those sweet blue eyes suffused with tender apprehension; and when they encountered too speaking a glance from Mr. Mulcaster's, they were blushinglly averted. In addition to these obvious tokens of modesty and tenderness, there was much of mind in her occasional look; and as the breeze or the branches caught and lifted the long ringlets of her hair, a forehead was discovered which would have satisfied the most scrupulous craniologist.

The lightfooted Dora was the first at the Bower Cottage; William was by her side the next instant. Honoria's heavy thoughts made her step slow — that step once so bounding! "Very well, Mr. Mul-

caster," she said, as she came up with them; "see how you abandon an old friend! — Pray take warning, Miss Clavering, and never believe him if he talks to you of friendship."

"No! do not believe me, if ever I talk to you of friendship," said William, addressing Dora, with emphasis of voice and eyes.

Dora affected to put up her lip. "Mr. Mulcaster is doubtless engaged to say smart things for the whole county, so I won't molest him in his office. I should really like to know how many are his own, and how many he borrows from you and his father; and to how many persons he has said them all before."

"I acquit him of ever saying one of them to me," replied Honoria. "What he does *me* the favour of uttering out of Miss Dora Clavering's company, are much better; having more wit, and less heart in them."

William's grateful rapture at this testimony was beyond bounds. Dora having not a word to answer with, ran into the little demesne of the show cottage.

The small tenement was all casement windows; and rural benches; and rudely-pleasing verandahs, and treillages of hawthorns and honeysuckles; with water and weeping willows; and thickets of lilacs in most luxuriant flower. Its furniture was in the same pastoral taste; and Dora Clavering seemed so completely enchanted with the whole thing, that it was not improbable she actually wished it hers for life, even though burthened with one at least of her present companions, and for the same awful term.

In so Arcadian a scene, a man who had read Greek and Latin pastorals, unluckily felt tempted to make one or two apt allusions to them; which involving some compliment to their especial hearer, made her shy of listening to more, and she very soon proposed returning. In walking back to the house, she took Honoria's arm. Dora was certainly either a little afraid of herself, or of Honoria's opinion of her; for not a single glance or bantering word encouraged William to renew their hazardous war of mimic fault-finding.

This mood lasted, till having met the other ladies proceeding to the greenhouse, they all turned in that direction. After an animated description of the lovely Bower Cottage to her sister, who was not permitted to walk so far, Dora fell again under Mr. Mulcaster's particular care.

Lady Henderson and Miss Mulcaster lost themselves in the depths of the umbrageous greenhouse. Miss Clavering sat down on one of the benches, talking to Jane and Honoria of Portugal and her mother ; so that Dora, protected by their vicinity, yet freed from the restraint of their immediate presence, could go on loitering round the sunny structure, gathering common garden-flowers growing at its base, and drawing forth Mr. Mulcaster's feelings by a mixture of unguarded acknowledgement and affected indifference.

No title of honour was ever listened to with greater complacency than Dora Clavering seemed to hear that of "cruel" continually addressed to her by William ; and he, in return, heard with the utmost atisfaction, the epithets "absurd !" "too

ridiculous!" lavished on his bolder effusions. Intimacy, in fact, increased so rapidly between them, that, advancing a large step towards familiarity, he now addressed her but in the third person, asking if "the fair Dora would permit;" "if the fair Dora would have the goodness," &c.

When the ladies had finished their inspection of the foreign shrubs, and were retracing their way to the house, the conversation naturally turned upon those of our native growth. This ended by William's undertaking to seek and find a bee orchis for Lady Henderson the very next day. Dora laughingly prayed he would find her a moss-rose as she was dying for one; to which, being pressed to say what other flowers she liked, and naming several at random, (never in blow at the same time, when not forced,) William proudly declared he would add all her favourites.

As the Monksden party were about to take leave, Jane Mulcaster suddenly proposed detaining one of the ladies to din-

ner, pathetically describing their forlorn situation, without their father ; therefore without the power of admitting any single man under the age of Colonel Mason. This hint was not lost upon Lady Henderson, and she did not object, therefore, to Miss Clavering's smiling permission for her sister to remain. Dora hesitated merely because she wished to stay, and feared she was wrong in wishing it ; but every body urged her, and she resigned herself.

William's rapture rose almost beyond the power of discretion to conceal its force : for blessing followed blessing ! Dora was to stay all night, that Sir John's horses might be spared ; and the Misses Mulcaster were to take her home the next day when they went to pay visits ; for visits were in prospect, as Sophia and Henrietta were returned, and had *not* gone to Arthur's Court.

When the final arrangement was concluded, William uttered half a groan, remembering that he had a sacrifice to make on the morrow. However, for the

present he was determined to enjoy ; and when the ladies retired to make a slight alteration in their dress, he hastened to hold a consultation with his trusty squire, gave him most particular instructions upon a particular subject, and then returned (hastily re-dressed,) to await his sisters and their fair guest in the drawing-room.

No one could do the honours of home more amiably, nay, gracefully, than William Mulcaster, *when he chose it*. His present performance was any thing but a *pendant* for his exhibited gracelessness to poor Mr. Rutherford. To Dora, to Miss O'Hara, to his sisters, to Colonel Mason, he was all that is attentive without officiousness, gay without impertinence, obliging without parade : nothing gave him trouble ; nothing *bored* him (his favourite phrase upon ordinary occasions) ; in short he made himself downright delightful.

The artless young creature whom he was charming, little suspected that half this agreeableness was solely the effect of

her influence: yet William had the candour to tell her he was not always thus amiable; that he had his "ways" and his "wilfulness;" and that in consequence, his sisters often honoured him with the title of their prince.

Dora saw nothing very revolting in this portrait of his lordliness, when drawn by his own pencil; and she continued to reward his ingenuousness, by smiling and singing, and looking as if she defied his tyranny. Each of the Misses Mulcaster exerted themselves after their own peculiar fashion, to amuse and win upon their brother's favourite. Isabella, indeed, was at times lost in revery; recovering herself with a soft confusion which spoke to some, of thoughts on the distant ocean, in a little homeward-bound sloop. Sophia fluttered lightly about, singing snatches of French songs, or racked the prostrate intellect of the good-humoured Colonel Mason with inexplicable charades, or entertained the whole party by her paper-cuttings of caricature groups done in a moment with scissors. Henrietta stole

upon Dora's attention, by sitting looking at, and listening to her, with expressive approbation. Jane gave plenteous assistance to each individual; whilst Honoria, first observing, then attracted by Dora's sweetness and ingenuousness, found herself all at once embarked in a conversation about Lord Francis Fitz James.

Once more a most elaborate discussion of that gentleman's merits took place, affording Honoria a new opportunity of promulgating her sentiments of his character.

Miss Dora Clavering was astonished, even to incredulity: she looked as though she would have looked our heroine through; and the latter, fluttered by the hope that this scrutiny arose from some knowledge of Fitz Arthur's sentiments towards her, hoping she knew not what, eagerly resumed her criticisms, with a warmth, and for a secret purpose, which might have taught her, that even Lord Francis might possibly deserve a more charitable construction than she put upon his conduct. She did him, however, the

justice of saying she believed him above the mean vice of vanity; as in all his conversations with her she could not remember one word or look which appeared deliberately meant to angle for admiration, or to cheat her by affecting it in himself.

Dora Clavering appeared so much pleased with her lowered opinion of him that Honoria's hope of some happy result to herself, in consequence, grew every moment stronger.

William railed at the influence of some thwarting star; averring, that nothing short of planetary power could have prevented his gifted friend from gaining all suffrages. It certainly was a most singular thing that Lord Francis Fitz James, who was an idol every where else, should be thought so slightly of at Edenfell! William was every way disappointed: he had somehow meant to be every day at Ravenshaw, and he had not gone there above three times; and he had expected to see a great intimacy take place between Lord Francis and Delaval Fitz Arthur;

and they seemed particularly to avoid each other. In short the whole thing was a failure.

Jane owned she was disappointed too, about Lord Francis: but she refused explaining the nature of her disappointment.

The hopes of youth spring up as quickly as weeds, and from as little soil. Honoria's heart had its vague hopes, after having thus disburthened itself to an intimate friend of Fitz Arthur's on the subject of Lord Francis; and she could then bear her part in the blameless hilarity of those around her.

The Misses Mulcaster and Dora Clavering were comparing notes on the subject of their early days. Among the recollections of the former's childhood, a story was told, and immoderately laughed at by them all, which however was pregnant of after-reflection to such as mused upon human character. It was about a certain dress-wig of their father's, which, after having been duly powdered by his man, and hung up ready for him to put

on, had been given away by William and Jane to an old beggar without hair, or a young one without a hat, who had got to the hall-door where the two children were playing.

The anecdote was told by Sophia, simply to excite a laugh at their dear father's discomfiture on the discovery of his loss; and the two persons figuring in it were little aware of the gratifying conclusions which might be drawn from the tale. Dora Clavering, perhaps, did not analyze the cause of her feelings on the subject; yet she felt even more favourably towards William than Honoria did; who sat deciding in her own mind, that such little domestic gossip throws more light upon human nature, than all the histories that ever were penned.

"And pray, Mr. Mulcaster," asked Honoria, as he paused for a moment near where she was thus musing apart from the others, "what has kept you from accompanying the Dean to ——?"

William's colour heightened as he answered the half-accusing question.

“O, female influence of course. Four sisters were sure to carry it over one father. You women have so many provoking ways of being charming:—there’s Isabella, she is interesting; Sophy is engaging; Henny is winning; Jane—but there’s no word for dear Jane’s manner—she *loves away* one’s heart. You, we all know, are bewitching!”

Honorina bent playfully to the compliment. “And Miss Dora Clavering?”

“She intoxicates!” The tone in which those words were uttered, proved the truth of the assertion.

“Exactly so, I perceive,” resumed Honorina smiling; “and as she designedly spices the cup pretty high for *you*, you are bound to drink it with rapture, and not enquire whether it be the prettiest coquetry imaginable, or innocence unconscious of its own danger, which mixes the ingredients!”

“You think her a coquette!” William exclaimed in alarm.

“No, indeed—indeed I do not,” was Honorina’s hasty answer. “Though per-

haps the sweet girl would not thank me for saying so just now."

William felt what he might infer from this, and his heart beat with gratification. "Miss O'Hara, you are too delightful," he resumed, with such energy, that it attracted the attention of the fair lady discussed. "What are you and William about there?" asked Jane, looking towards them.

"I am only sitting with the utmost complacency to hear myself complimented," returned Honoria. "Your brother is in raptures with me, because I am admiring a person he admires. Do what he will, however, he will not get me to digest the affront of his never having shown the smallest desire of a flirtation with me; unless he can prove (what I suspect is the case,) that he does not like mere flirting."

This kind insinuation again transported William. Dora Clavering, merely to say something, now enquired "if Mr. Mulcaster meant to be an idle man all his life?" She did not seem displeased

to find that he had chosen the path of a country gentleman, and that he hoped to make himself something hereafter in parliament. When he added, with his usual levity, "that he was studying all the poets and orators of ancient days, in order to help him at making a figure," Dora observed, with as much good sense as gaiety, "that for her part, if she were going to make new laws, she would begin by studying old ones; therefore ventured to advise Blackstone, instead of Cicero." William bowed his thanks; and that night, the whole shelf of law-books disappeared from the library.

When such is the influence of a new affection, no man need fear its future dominion. If their children's attachments, instead of diverting them from virtue and knowledge, stimulate their pursuit of such objects, where are the parents that would wish to quench the fire?

Such conversation as we have been describing, was prolonged after Colonel Mason's departure; so that the clock struck twelve ere the little party separ-

ated for their chambers. Dora, to sleep, and dream of the handsome Mr. Mulcaster and the lovely Bower Cottage : William, not to sleep, (nor that night to do more than open every law-book,) but to think of his felicity in being under the same roof with so charming a creature.

In William's heart, at this present moment, love was breathing his first spring breath of gentlest glow, and balmiest sweetness : thrill was succeeding to thrill there, in soft and delightful succession, like the waves of some enchanted stream. All in that young heart might be called song, verdure, and sunshine ; for that heart had never known one throb of forbidden feeling. Piety and parental care had guarded the paradise.

Perhaps this was the sweetest moment of William's life, though not the most rapturous. One to be looked back upon, as man reverts to the sports of his boyhood, remembering them with regret, because conscious how imperfectly he then valued them through impatience for more vivid enjoyments. William felt now that his

heart had never been touched before; and devoutly did he thank Heaven for disentangling him from the chain which his own folly and whim had bound him in, to Lady Catherine Eustace.

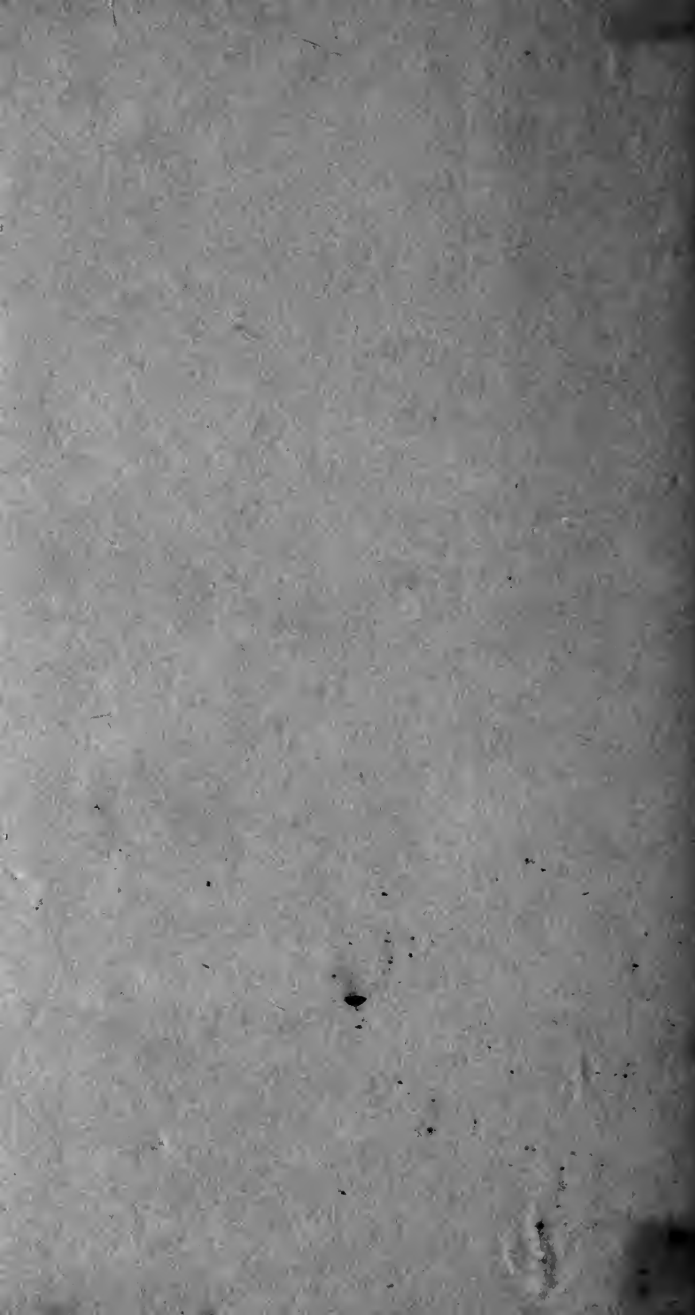
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